

# Resolving Conflict By Cultivating Repentance

*Epistle of James*  
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 4, the fourth chapter of James's epistle. We are continuing to look at the last four verses of that section that we've been looking at for a number of weeks, that is James 4:1-10, the larger section, and we're looking at verses 7 to 10 in the next couple of weeks, beginning last Sunday and for a couple more weeks probably after this.

We're talking about resolving conflict. That's James's main concern in this 10-verse section of his letter. He's concerned about the conflicts that are happening in the body of Christ and to the churches to which he writes, to the believers to whom he writes. He's aware that they are struggling with conflicts and he's wanting them to understand the causes of the conflicts and then how to honor God by turning away from this lifestyle of conflict to being people that are like their Savior, the Prince of Peace, and who walk in holiness and love and peace. So we're going to call the message this morning, we've been titling all of the messages "Resolving Conflict By or Resolving Conflict" in this section and today we'll begin the same title "Resolving Conflict By Cultivating Repentance." Resolving conflict by cultivating repentance. It's interesting that the word "repent or repentance" is not actually in the text itself explicitly but he is implicitly calling us to repent and teaching us about repentance in these four verses. Verses 7 to 10 we noted last time are really the application section of this larger section, verses 1 to 10. We've been talking about conflict. He's been telling them, and we're going to read the whole section in just a moment and you'll see it again, he's saying conflicts ought not to be there and the reason they are there is because of your hearts, sin in your hearts, and it's ugly. It's uglier than you think it is, than you and I think it is. It's spiritual adultery. It is basically spiritual treason. You are making yourself an enemy of God in your conflicts that you have and so you ought to hate it. We ought to hate our sin. Then he turns the corner in verse 6 to give us a sense of hope that God gives grace. Then verses 7 to 10 have the first imperatives in the section. Remember, an imperative is a command. These are the first commands in this section on conflict. He gives 10 of them, 10 commands in those four verses kind of in rapid fire and we noted they are all in the same aorist tense, the Greek aorist tense which pictures punctiliar action. They are like staccato commands: boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, like he's driving nails in and he's wanting us to take this and apply it. But as we step back from it and we look at those 10 commands, what I'm going to suggest to you is that he's basically saying that the way that we're going to overcome this is to really learn

what it is to cultivate repentance. That's what he's going to focus on in verses 7 to 9 in particular and we're going to be looking at verses 7 and 8 today.

Cultivating repentance. It's not just a one-time thing. Repentance is not just a one-time thing, it is a way of life. It's actually essential and fundamental and basic to biblical Christianity which is surprising to many who have been involved in the church for a number of years because you hear so little about repentance, and repenting in many churches today, even Bible believing, self-professed Bible believing churches, there is a deemphasis on this important subject.

Now it's an important subject. It's pivotal to Christianity. You just think about that with me for a moment, how important it is, the necessity of it. Jesus began his ministry and the theme of his sermons are given to us there in Matthew 4, his message was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He basically picked up John's main theme, John the Baptist's main theme was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then Jesus' messages were, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He preached again and again calling for repentance. Luke 13:5, "Repent or you will likewise perish." Then you see even the ascended Christ after the ascension that we read about earlier in Acts, he's seated at the right hand of God. In Revelation, John, the Apocalypse of John, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the last book of the Bible begins with seven letters to churches and Jesus is walking among the lampstands of his churches and what is the refrain throughout those letters? What is his command to his people over and over and over again? Five of those churches, two churches don't get this command, five of them do. The command is, "Repent. Repent."

So Christ spent his ministry, his earthly ministry proclaiming that message, repent. The ascended Christ now appearing to John in Revelation continues to say that, "The message for my people is repent." So why so little about repentance? Because we're not reading our Bibles carefully. We're not seeing that this is a part of what salvation really is. Salvation, justification, our declaration that we are righteous before God happens because of what Jesus Christ has done completely. Yes, his shed blood in our place, just as we sung about earlier. Before the throne of God above. Our only plea is Jesus' righteousness, his cross, and yet the response to the Gospel is faith and repentance. It is to place your faith in Jesus Christ, to run to Christ and the evidence of a heart that has truly been changed will be repenting, turning from sin. In fact, repentance could be defined simply as turning from sin to God. Turning from sin to God.

Now, in fact the importance of it is illustrated in church history a number of times. One of the things that I was reminded of this week as I was studying, was that Martin Luther in his 95 theses that were basically the beginning flashpoint that started the Reformation, his 95 theses, his first two theses were on repentance. This is what he said. This is his 95 theses, the first statement, these statements of protest that he wrote against the medieval Roman Catholic Church in 1517. We just celebrated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary this past October 31<sup>st</sup>. Thesis 1: when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "repent," he wanted the entire life of believers to be one of penitence. The second one, the second thesis: this word, "repent," cannot be understood as referring to penance as a sacrament as

administered by the Catholic Church. Penance is not repentance. Doing acts of works to appease God that make it somehow easy, that's penance. That's not repentance. Repentance is a heart that turns from sin to God. It's a Godward grace where because of what Christ has done and because you see the beauty of Christ and you see the ugliness of your sin, you turn from sin to God and it's a necessary, it is a necessary element in conversion. "Except you repent," Jesus said in Luke 13:5, "unless you repent, you will likewise perish."

So true faith, true saving faith is a faith that repents. It turns from sin. And James is helping the believers to whom he writes to realize that it's not a one-time thing, though. Repentance that happens at conversion, maybe initial repentance, we might call it, when you see your sin, you see the glory of Christ, you see the sufficiency of what he's done dying in our place, paying for our sins, your heart cries out to him. You go to him for salvation and you already have a measure of sorrow for sin but then even in coming to him, he creates more sorrow for sin and more of a turning from sin to God. That's repentance and that's conversion.

Initial conversion, initial repentance in conversion is not the end, though. It's to be, as Luther said, our entire life is to be one of ongoing repentance and this is what James is calling for. He's calling for his, the people to whom he writes, to continue repenting; that you're not going to overcome conflicts without thorough repentance and we need to understand what that is. That's what we're going to look at today. James 4:1-10. Resolving conflict by cultivating repentance.

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank you for your precious word. We thank you that it deals with us as we are, that it helps us to see what truly our problems are. We tend to be people who*

*have far too low a view of you and far too high a view of ourselves. So thank you for the correcting power of your word which humbles us and enables us then to receive grace, for you resist the proud but you give grace to the humble. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

This morning, resolving conflict by cultivating repentance. One of the things that we see as we study the New Testament, the Old Testament and New Testament actually, is that repentance is a word which is very rich and has several elements to it, really two defining elements but you can add other things in too, but the two major elements. Repentance, two Old Testament words. Let's start with the Old Testament. There are two main words for "repent" that are translated "repent" in the Old Testament. The first speaks of sorrow and humiliation for sin. It is a word that Job uses when he says, "I repent in sackcloth and ashes. I am mourning over my wickedness and I repent in sackcloth and ashes." The word there translated "repent" is a word which means "to be sorrowful; to mourn." The other word which is used most often in the Old Testament is a word that simply means "turn; to turn or return." It's the Hebrew word "shub" and it speaks of just a change in direction. You're going in one direction and you turn. So these two words are used to speak of this concept of repentance, so repenting means to come to a measure of sorrow for your sin, that is godly sorrow that leads to a change of direction: a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of life. That's what repentance is, it's to be going in one direction and to turn and go the other direction, but it happens because the heart is affected. This is why Paul in 2 Corinthians 7 in talking about repentance says that it is, there is a kind of sorrow that does not lead to repentance. He calls that worldly sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7, that is, a sorrow that I have sinned, and I have messed up my life, maybe I have damaged my reputation. It's just man-centered sorrow. It never has a Godward element to it. Godward sorrow looks at the Lord as the one who is most deeply offended and sees our sin before his holiness and that causes us to mourn. This was David's repentance when he said after his terrible sin with Bathsheba and killing Uriah the Hittite, he said, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned," in Psalm 51. I mean, he knew he had sinned against them too but in comparison the offense was so great against a holy God that that was all he could see at that moment as he talked to God was his wickedness before God, and so he was sorrowful over the breach that he had made before a holy God.

So repentance has these elements, it's sorrow and turning. Sorrow, sometimes as you read the Puritans, for example, they'll talk about humiliation; that God in working the grace of repentance, brings us into the valley of humiliation where we come face-to-face with the ugliness of our sin and this is a necessary step in repentance, that if you don't hate your sin, you won't turn from it. And this is what I think James is talking about. This is what's behind his language here in this passage. I mean, look with me at verse 9 particularly, "Be miserable." These four imperatives: be miserable, mourn and weep, the first three, and the fourth imperative is let be turned, let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy be turned into gloom. You see, he's calling for humiliation. He's calling for brokenness. He's calling for us to labor before God to seek these attitudes over our sin. He's saying, "Listen, we have a tendency to have conflicts all around us." That's essentially what we've been looking at, right? Where do these conflicts come? Where do these wars and battles come? You're in conflict all the time. You're having hostility.

You're losing your temper. You're yelling at your loved ones. Where does that come from? We tend to think our problem is the other person. "Yeah, I lose my temper because I'm surrounded by a bunch of crazy people." That's what we think. "I just need a little help getting them to do what they need to do." God says, "No, that is not your problem. That is fundamentally not your problem. Your problem is the wickedness in your own heart." Because you could be surrounded by crazy people, maybe you still are surrounded by some crazy people. Of course we are. We all are crazy people, that's the reality, so you can't help but be surrounded by crazy people, but you can be surrounded by people who are struggling and who are not doing what they ought to do and you can walk in holiness and righteousness, "for there is no temptation that has overtaken you but such as is common to man, and God is faithful in every temptation to provide a means of escape." He will help you walk in holiness, and as we saw when we looked a few weeks back, the problem Jesus said is in our hearts. That's where adulteries and murders come, they come from our heart, from within. It's not what goes into the man that defiles a man, but what comes out of his heart, Jesus said. He's using that word picture. The Pharisees were worrying about what they ate and that could defile them before God and Jesus said, "No, it's not what comes in, it's what comes out." So it's not the circumstances or the people in your life that defile you. No, they are just the squeezing like a tube of toothpaste, when you squeeze a tube of toothpaste, what's going to come out? Toothpaste, whatever is inside. You squeeze a tube and what comes out? So the people in your life, the circumstances in your life, they are the squeezing. What comes out is from your and my own sinful heart when it's sin.

So knowing that, he says now that's the reality. It's your own lust. You want something, and you want it too much. You want good things too much and you want some bad things, and when you don't get them, even when you want a good thing too much, you don't get it, you punish other people. You become murderous. You call people fools. You speak harshly. That's sin in your own heart, he says.

Then he says, "I want you to see how ugly it is. Well, first of all, you should pray. You have not because you ask not. If you would just pray for the things that you need, that would be the best place to start in dealing with this conflict problem you have." Then he says, "But even when you pray, though, you don't go to God with the right heart where you want his kingdom and his glory. You want your own lust satisfied so he doesn't even answer your prayers." And he says, "Listen, do you not understand you're being a spiritual adulterer?" That's where the strong language, you adulteresses. Now, James has been calling these people, I mean, think about it, as we put ourselves in the place of the recipients of the letter, he has said, he calls them brethren 15 times, "My brethren. My beloved brethren," over and over and over again, but in this section, he doesn't call us beloved brethren. He first of all says, "You adulteresses." That's what he calls us, and then later in verse 9, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you double-minded." I mean, he's hitting hard. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, James is smacking us in the spiritual mouth. That's because that's what we need.

God is perfect in wisdom and he knows that we need that. We tend to become very complacent about our sin and he's saying, "Listen, if you see this from God's viewpoint,

he sees it as spiritual adultery, as you are making war against him. You think your problem is out there, but your heart is making war against God when you yell and when you lose your temper and when you sin against people around you because of the desires of your heart. You're making war against God." Then he says in verse 5 that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. So you're making war against God with the Spirit of God closer to you than your very breath. He's right here inside of you. Now, this should be terrifying and overwhelming and that's why in verse 6 he says, "But He gives a greater grace." Don't despair. What I've said would lead you to despair but don't despair, he gives a greater grace. God is a God of grace. He only breaks down so that he can build up. He only cuts so that he can heal. This is spiritual surgery, like a surgeon doing a heart surgery. You have to cut in, you have to tear the flesh, you have to even break apart the bone to deal, to take the heart out and to deal with it. All those things seen in themselves are harsh and violent, and yet in reality in the hands of a surgeon, it's kindness and love. It's exactly what needs to be done. This is who God is. He is good.

So when he gets to the, "Be miserable, mourn and weep," he's basically saying, "Apply what I've been telling you. Meditate on the fact that you've been committing adultery, that you've been murdering, and go into the valley of humiliation in various areas where your struggling," he is saying, "spend time with God really looking at it and let the Lord cultivate a deep repentance in you." You see, repentance is not a one-time act, it is an ongoing lifestyle and the true believer is the one who wants to cultivate that. Now, we forget. We're sheep. We forget that we need to be repenting but he's reminding us right here really clearly, "Repent."

You know, a quote that I found helpful this week. Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's commentaries, many of you have seen those, commentary on the whole Bible. Philip Henry said this, "I hope to carry my repentance up to the gates of heaven itself." I want to carry my repentance before God all the way as I walk into the gates of heaven and I'm still repenting. I mean, after we get into the gates of heaven, we don't have to repent anymore but all the way to the gates of heaven, looking at my sin, seeing my need of Christ. I don't want to ever ever lose sight of how much I need him. That's what makes him so sweet and so precious.

Now, what I want us to look at this morning is three points to continue fleshing this out in what we see in the text. The first is the need for repentance. It's going to go a little faster because I've basically given you this point already. I'm just going to hit the reminders and you'll see that I kind of did it in the introduction. My first point bled over into the introduction.

The need for repentance. Now, he's saying that you need to repent, you need to spend time in verse 9, "Be miserable, mourn, weep. And I'm telling you, submit yourselves to God. I'm telling you, turn from this. I want you to make a turn from being people who carry conflict wherever they go to being people who spread peace." But it's clear that repentance is a part of the essence of the Christian life. I mentioned John the Baptist preaching; Jesus preaching in his ministry; in heaven; the apostles preached repentance in Acts 2, the first great sermon preached after the giving of the Holy Spirit; at Pentecost

Peter preaches, 3,000 people are pierced to the heart and are saved. Before they are saved, they say to Peter, "Brother, what must we do?" And what does Peter say? "Repent and be baptized." Turn. Turn from your sin to God. Turn from ruling your life to surrendering to his Lordship. Acts 17:30. That was Peter preaching. Acts 17:30 is an example of Paul's preaching and at the Areopagus, Mars Hill in Athens, a place that you might think you want to be fashionable in what you say, you're talking among the place where Plato and Aristotle have walked these streets, Socrates teaching. These folks love wisdom. They love rhetoric, skillful rhetoric. Paul preaches there the message of Christ and he says, "God commands every man everywhere to repent." That was his application. Repent. You see, repentance is the essence of the Gospel. Where Jesus is, repentance is, the call to repent, and if the call to repent is not there, there is question that Christ is not there, not in his fullness.

The need for repentance. Now that's the first point. The second point is the source of repentance. The source of repentance. He has told us in verse 6 he gives a greater grace. He has basically laid out the case of the need for repentance in verses 1 to 5. You need to repent is what he's basically saying, right, in verses 1 to 5? But verse 6 he says, "But He gives grace." You need to repent but you're going to need grace and the source of repentance in a word is grace, the grace of God. That is, true repentance is the work of God. You can't do it yourself. Scripture calls you to but in the same way that he calls you to believe, you can't believe apart from his grace. You can't repent apart from his grace.

Paul makes this real clear in his letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:24. He's telling Timothy that he's dealing with false teachers and 24 and verse 25 particularly, he says to Timothy, "Now you're dealing with false teachers." Timothy, "The Lord's bond-servant," that is you, the Lord's bond-servant, the Lord's slave which you are, Timothy, "must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition," listen to this, "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil." Listen, they are opposing you, they are opposing the truth. You want to get angry with them, but you must be gentle with them. You speak the truth, but you speak it in love and kindness and out of a desire to see them come to salvation. What's going to happen? God must grant them repentance.

So even as you reason with them, you realize that God has to give them the ability to repent. You're trusting in his grace and that is what James is saying, "Listen, God is a God of grace." And, in fact, think about this, grace God's free gift, and we could define it its absolute, God's absolutely free expression of lovingkindness. There is nothing that grace, grace is completely unmerited, and God freely gives it. So you're asking for a gift. You're not earning something, you're not doing something to earn it. You can't work up repentance and you can't do something to make God give it to you. He must give it to you freely, but you must ask him. All you can do is ask.

Grace is free, so he says, "You need grace. God gives grace and I'm going to keep hammering you down," James is basically saying. He doesn't tell us this. This is me

reading between the lines. "I'm going to keep knocking you down in these verses because God gives grace to people who are humble, therefore, the biggest obstacle to you and me getting grace is our pride." We think that we are more than we are and, therefore, God resists us. God loves the contrite and broken heart. Now, that's actually the contrite and broken heart is the sane heart. The prideful heart in a human being is insane, but we all are. We have that measure of insanity in us. We tend to underestimate our sin, as I said earlier, and underestimate the magnitude of it. We think it's not as bad as it really is. It's much more heinous than we think it is. It's much more offensive to a holy God.

So he has to show us what it truly is so that he can humble us and then he will then shower us with his kindness. He is a God rich in mercy who forgives generously but he only forgives those who know they need to be forgiven. He does not forgive carte blanche everyone. In fact, I heard a minister say this one time, I think it's a good statement. Grace, God's free unmerited lovingkindness poured out upon those who don't deserve it. Grace, this is the statement: grace only operates in the context of a realization on the part of the recipient of grace that there is no other option but grace. Let me say that again: grace only operates in the context of a realization on the part of the recipient of grace that there is no other option but grace. You have to come to the place where you know there is no other hope for you but the grace of God and then grace freely and lavishly comes in.

So it's necessary for us to come to a place where we see our great need of grace. You think about the story of the prodigal son. The prodigal son, remember, the man has two sons, the older son who is at home and being obedient and doing all his duties, and the younger son who wants to go off and live for himself and live however he wants to live, and he doesn't really believe his father is good. So he says, "I want my, I want you to divide the inheritance right now," essentially saying, "To me you're as good as dead, dad, so just go ahead and let's just give me my half of the inheritance. If you die today, what would I get? So give it to me and let me go." So he takes that inheritance and he runs off and he spends it quickly in wanton pleasure. He just lives for the pleasures of this world. He spends all the money, he has no money. Remember, to stay alive he's got a job feeding pigs and as he's feeding the pigs one day, pouring the food into the trough or the pigsty, he thinks, "I wish I could eat some of that food." How far he had come down. He was at the lowest of lows and he thinks in that moment, "My only hope is grace. In my father's house, the guys that work for him have more than enough. I'm going to go back to my father." That's the beginning of grace.

So you realize that there is no other option but grace. The source of repentance, the beginning of repentance is the realization that it must be given. It's only God. It's his grace. We need repentance. Repentance must come from God. That's the first two points. The need for repentance, the source of repentance, and now thirdly, the first step of repentance where we really focus in on the words of verse 7 and 8 this morning. The first step of repentance. He's going to flesh out what repenting looks like in these verses, but he starts off with something very important. In a sense as we look at this, I think you're going to see it's counterintuitive. The first step of repentance is to go decisively and confidently to God. That is the first step of repentance. It's instructive that he says what



he says in verse 7 and 8, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," before he says, "Cleanse your hands, purify your hearts. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom." The first step of repentance is to go to God.

Now, I say it's counterintuitive because we feel like knowing that we should repent, how can we go to God? I need to mourn for my sin more before I go to God. You see how you can think that way? I'm not sorry enough for my sin, how can I go and talk to the Lord about this? I need to spend some time getting sorry for my sin so that then I can go to God. That is wrong. That is completely, it sounds logical to us in our fallenness because we tend to have pride. We think we can do something of value and we can't. The reality is you can't make yourself sorry for sin so go to him. Run to him as you are, and he will then make you sorry for your sin. Go to him asking him, "Lord, I'm sorry to some level but I'm not even, I don't even see the half of this. I don't even see the tenth of this. Lord, but I need you, I'm running to you, now you help me repent. I want to turn from this."

You run to God first. That's the first step of repentance. Go decisively and confidently to God on the basis of Christ and the basis of God's clear commands as we have in this passage. In fact, I'm going to suggest to you that two of the imperatives are basically saying the same thing: resist the devil and he will flee from you and draw near to God and he will draw near to you, are saying essentially the same thing. It's a little like it on the surface but let me help you see that. First of all in the structure of the 10 imperatives that we have, the first imperative in verse 7, "Submit therefore to God," we spent looking at last time, that sermon. The next two I think are a couplet. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Those two belong together. Then the next two after that belong together, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Now, do you see how if you start looking at that, you can see a real parallel in both of these two couplets. I mean, cleanse your hands, you sinners, the second couplet, purify your hearts, you double-minded." Do you see how those go together? Cleanse your hands, that is your actions. Purify your heart, that is your attitudes. You need cleansing, you need purification of your actions and your attitudes. So those two clearly go together, don't they? The first two do as well, though: resist the devil and he will flee from you, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Let me explain that: resist the devil, this is your action, you resist the devil and what happens? Look, there is motion. He moves away from you. Draw near to God and there is motion, he draws near to you. You see that so it's a parallel structure, exactly parallel, and James is wanting us to see it as a couplet. These two things are saying the same thing in the same way that "cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded," is basically saying the same thing. Different aspects of the same thing.

Resist the devil in this context means to do exactly what he's saying when he says draw near to God. Now let's talk about that. How is resisting the devil a rough equivalent, a close equivalent really, to drawing near to God? Well, the word "devil," the English word "devil" transliterates the Greek word "diabolos." Remember, transliterate is a letter for letter rendering from one language to another. Translation is when you take a word and you take the meaning from one word in one language to another word in another

language. The meaning is translation. Transliteration is letter for letter. Devil is a close, you can see it's a little more distant from English to Greek, diabolos, devil. We've got some stuff messed up there, but you remember Jacob and James are the same words? Remember when we started this study way back I shared that James is actually the Hebrew word is Jacob, but we say the book of James because Jacob, to get to us in English today, went through French, and you know the French mess things up and they messed it up and they got an "m" in there and so James is now Jacob. Well, something like that happened in devil to diabolos, but you may be more familiar, there's a dish that I like to order at Italian restaurants, pasta diablo?? Anyway, it's really hot. It's the pasta of the devil apparently and so it's one thing that is good. He obviously has nothing to do with it because it's really good. But diabolos, the word "diabolos, devil," actually the Greek word that diabolos, what it meant is "one who hurls through or over or at." It means "to throw through or over or at," and so it means a person who slanders, who verbally attacks, who hates. There is malice in it. It means "to accuse," and diabolos actually translates, now translates, remember meaning for meaning a Hebrew word. The Hebrew word, it's not a transliteration of the Hebrew, it's a translation, the Hebrew word is "satan," which we transliterate Satan. The Hebrew word "satan" means the same thing as "diabolos" in Greek. Satan in Hebrew means "adversary; accuser." He's an adversary. He's the accuser. He stands against God and against us. He accuses us, and he accuses God. Scripture calls him the accuser of the brethren, the serpent of old. His way is to accuse; to slander; to blaspheme.

So his methodology, his modus operandi, the thing that he does is he accuses you and he accuses God. Now what does that look like? He accuses you to God. We see this in the book of Job. He tells God, Satan remember appears to God in Job 1 and 2 and he says, "You know, I've been out walking on the earth." And God says, "Have you considered my servant Job?" God brings Job up and Satan says to God, "He only serves you because you've got a hedge around him." He starts accusing Job. "He doesn't really love you. He's only serving you because you're protecting him. If you let me at him, he will curse you to your face." So God pulls back the hedge and says, "You can do anything you want to him. Don't touch his life." And that's when all those calamities strike Job and Job does not curse God like Satan said. He's faithful to God. Satan then goes to appear before the Lord again at a time and God brings up Job a second time and says, "Have you considered my servant Job? You incited me against him but he's still faithful to me." And Satan says, "Skin for skin. He just serves you because you won't let me touch his life. If you let me go at him himself, he'll curse you." You see, he's accusing Job and, of course, God lets him do that. Job is still faithful. He struggles a little bit later on but he's basically faithful to God. God ends up blessing him more in the end than he was in the beginning. He comes to know God in a whole new way. God's purposes are worked out in that in an amazing way, but the point is Satan was accusing Job before God, but his operation is to do the opposite. He accuses God before you and me.

That's what he does. He is a liar from the beginning. He's a murderer from the beginning. What did he do? How did he murder Eve and Adam? He lied about God. That was his way of doing it and so what he does, he accuses and he tries to create distance. This is what he does. "I want to make you run from God." He can't make God run from us. "I

want to make you run from God." That's his plan and so when he says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," resist his lies which tell you you can't go to God. Stand firm against him. Resist means "to stand against." It's like a military feature. A speech. Stand against him. He's coming at you. He's hurling assault at you. Stand against him and if you keep standing against him, he will flee from you. You keep standing and keep trusting and keep believing.

Now back to what he did with Eve. Remember what he said to Eve? He said, "Has God said that you cannot eat from any tree in the garden?" He goes down there and there is a beautiful garden, perfect, I mean, the world is perfect. I was doing some gardening yesterday at my house. My son and I were talking about how the world is not perfect now. Isn't it easy to grow weeds and hard to grow what you want to grow? It wasn't that way in Eden. It was perfect. It still required work. Work was part of what God made man for, but it was rewarding work.

So Adam is cultivating the garden and Satan comes to him, comes to Eve and he says, "Did God say that you can't eat from any of these trees in the garden?" He's basically saying, "It's like God that he would put you in this beautiful garden and say you can't eat from any of these trees." What a liar. God had given them every tree save one. The only restricted commandment God had. If you think about God's law, at this point in time, there was a fence his law was around, one tree. The rest of the world was wide open. The liberal, generous heart of God on display. He makes man not because he needs anything from man, out of the bounty of his overflowing goodness, the Triune God creates, and he makes this beautiful world and he says, "Enjoy it, just don't do this." Satan comes and tries to flip it around and act like he's only given you one thing you probably can eat. The fence is around everything here, isn't it? He's assaulting God to Eve and he's making her doubt. He's planting a seed of doubt. He's really not good, is he?

Then so when she says, "No, we can eat from all the trees except for the one tree we can't eat from or even touch it, for we'll die." Satan says, "You surely shall not die." God's a liar is what he's saying. "He knows on the day that you eat of it, you will become like him, knowing good and evil. You see, God's trying to hold you back and what you need to do is stop submitting to him, stop seeking him, run away from him. That's where you're going to find life." That's the way Satan works. That's his game plan. It was his game plan in Eden and it's his game plan today in your life. If you're a born again Christian, if you have come to saving knowledge of Christ and you've repented and placed your faith in Christ, you've had that initial repentance and you're trusting in Jesus, then his game plan is still to try to divide you and the Father, to make you doubt his love so that when you're sinning and you're trapped in sin, he can't take away your salvation if you're truly saved, you can never lose your salvation if you truly come to faith, but he can make you miserable and less effective. He can keep you bound up in these conflicts and living a life that's inconsistent with who you are, and his strategy is going to be to deceive you into continuing to live according to the lies and then don't run to God. You can't run to God.

So when we sin, the first thing we should do when we sin is run to God. That is the first place we should go. Even though we're not yet sorry for it, even though we're not yet

fully aware of what we've done, the first thing we should do is run to our Father and cry out, "Abba, Father, I need you!" because we know that he is a God of mercy and grace to those who are in his Son and he wants us to draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, to receive grace and mercy in our time of need. You need grace and mercy when you've sinned.

So run to him but Satan is saying, "No, you can't go to him. You're probably not even a Christian. Why are you acting like that? You can't run to him. No, you shouldn't tell anybody about this. Let's keep this between you and me," basically is what he's saying. He doesn't say it that obviously, we would be on to it, but that's essentially what he's saying. "You keep it to yourself so that I can keep accusing you and accusing you and accusing you and defeating you."

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you." No, I will not listen to your lies about my Father. Because of who Christ is, God now sees me as if I had lived the perfect life of Jesus. The song we sang, "When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within." Don't argue about the guilt. There is no need in that. Of course there's guilt here. "Upward I look and see him there who made an end to all my sin." The issue to resist Satan is to say Jesus is finished with my sin and I'm going to my Father.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." You move toward him and he will move toward you. "If you seek Me, you will find Me. If you ask Me for grace, I will give it." He is generous and kind. He's going to deal with our sin. He does it. He's not the kind of God that some people are saying, that he just accepts you as you are, and you don't ever have to change. No, he's not like that. There is no need for repentance. No, there is need for repentance and repentance is what will happen if you come to him as you are truly, and you come to him in faith and you're willing to look at your life from his perspective. He will help you hate your sin.

Think about that, I mentioned the prodigal son earlier. Think about the prodigal son. I mentioned that he came to himself and he saw and he began to repent when he saw that, "Look at my life. Look what I've made of my life by squandering what my father had, and this is terrible. I'm going to go back to my father." You see, he makes the right decision. "I'm going to draw near to God. I'm not going to listen to my guilt. I'm not going to listen to Satan. I'm going to draw near to God." And he goes back to God, his father. Back to this story, remember, the young man leaves the place he is, and he starts making his way home, and he's even thinking through his, he rehearses his speech he's going to give to his dad. "Dad, I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Let me be as one of your hired servants. That's all I'm asking is just to be as one of your hired servants. I don't deserve to be related to you, but I know that you're kind and I'm coming back and asking for your kindness." So he's moving toward his father. Jesus is saying, "Move toward God."

And what happens? As he's making his way down the street toward his father's house, the text says his father sees him a long way off. Implicit in that is the sense that the father from time to time he's going about his business, is looking down the road to see if his son

is coming. You see, the father longs for his son to come home. He sees him afar off and he's coming down the road and what should happen in this situation is the son has done such great dishonor to this father, especially in the Ancient Near East in Israel and the surrounding areas, to dishonor your father like this, it would require a shaming, a public shaming to be entered back into any kind of relationship at all. It would require public shaming of the son. The father sees his son a long way off and what he does, he runs to his son. The older man runs to meet the younger wayward sinner.

Now, in that culture, for an old man to run was itself a shameful act. The idea is that an old wealthy man never runs to anybody, everybody runs to him. He was making a public spectacle of himself by running to his son. He was saying, "Let the shame fall on me. I'm not going to have, there will be no shaming service for my son. The shame will fall on me." And he goes, and he embraces his son. The son begins his speech, remember? He gets part of it out, "Father, I've sinned against heaven, against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son." He's about to go into the next part, "let me be as one of your hired servants," and the father interrupts him. No more discussion. Basically he says, "Kill the fatted calf. Bring out the robe." He's in these tattered clothes. "Bring out the robe. My son is not going to be robbed in these tattered clothes. Bring out the robe. Bring out the ring. Put it on his finger. Kill the fatted calf for this son who was lost has been found."

That's the heart of God toward wayward sinners. That's the heart. So now think about, he comes back into that. He was sorry for his sin when he was looking at the pigsty and I think he had a measure of true repentance obviously or he wouldn't have come back. But how his repentance grows when he comes back, and he sees the love of a father like that. "I treated this man as if I wanted nothing to do with him." You see, going back into the presence of God deepens his repentance. "Now I'm broken in a way I was never broken before." James is saying that's what we're to do. Don't try to be miserable and mourn and weep in your own strength. Run to God and in his presence telling him what you can tell him about your sin, you will find as you hear him loving you, surrounding you with his love, you will find more ability to mourn and weep and let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. But it starts with running to God. That's where repentance starts. It's a grace that must be given and to receive it you have to go to him through Christ.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank you for the beauty of your ways and the beauty of your character. You are so wonderfully good. Everything you do is right. Everything about you is perfect. We confess how we doubt you, how we listen to the world, we listen to our own sinful hearts, we listen to the devil, and we've had doubts sown in our hearts and they've grown and when we see you as you are, we see these things melt away and we just know we need to see more and more and more of you so that we can let all of these lies be washed away. When we look at the cross, we see perfect eternal proof of your lovingkindness, your mercy, your grace and your love. Father, help us to repent. For those that are here today that have not truly repented for salvation, grant them the grace to run to you even now, crying out to you, trusting in you, looking to Jesus alone for their salvation, crying*

*out to him even to grant them repentance. Help them keep trusting and keep looking to Christ. And Father, for those who belong to you, may we be people who take our repentance, a deepening repentance all the way with us to the gates of heaven and we pray this for...*