

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

**Friendship with the World
James 4:1-6
Part Eight**

We are back once again to the Epistle of James. And we will once again look at **James 4:1-6**.

(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." In these verses James gives to us one more test of living faith. James gives to us one more test of saving faith. And what is that test? We have called it the "Friendship with the World test."

Genuine spiritual life and faithful Christian living involve separation from the world and all its countless contaminations. If we can remain unstained by the world, the genuineness of our faith will be clearly evident and we will pass this very important test.

One of the ways that we can know if we have become a friend of the world is if our various relationships are characterized by turmoil.

First of all, turmoil in our relationship with others. What does **James 4:1** say? **"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?"** Are you having struggles in your relationship with others? Then you need to consider the possibility that you are beginning to act and think more like the world rather than as a follower of Christ. What other relationship might be characterized by turmoil as we become contaminated by the world?

We are likely to see turmoil in our relationship with ourselves. What does **James 4:1-3** say? **"(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. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."** If you are experiencing turmoil in your interpersonal relationships, you can be fairly well-assured that internal conflicts either in yourself, others or both have preceded these particular interpersonal struggles. Interpersonal conflicts are fueled by internal conflicts.

Since prayer is an attempt to enjoy an interpersonal relationship with the Lord, it is not surprising to find that an internal conflict also disrupts our prayers. **".....You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."**

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This reference to certain professing believers' lack of praying or ineffective praying was not only a good excuse to expand on the subject of prayer over the past several weeks but it also has provided a perfect lead-in to the third relationship that is characterized by turmoil when we have been contaminated by the world.

Not only will friendship with the world most likely produce turmoil with others; not only will friendship with the world produce turmoil within ourselves, but it will also produce turmoil in our relationship with the Lord.

Turmoil in our relationship with the Lord

Let us read **James 4:4-6**, “**(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."** The turmoil that professing believers experience with the Lord as they become contaminated by the world is seen in three different areas. First of all it will be seen in their hostility toward God.

Hostility toward God (V.4)

When I speak of “hostility toward God,” I am not speaking of certain professing believers feeling hostile toward God, but I am speaking about them acting hostile toward Him. People who are acting hostile toward God may not even know it because they don’t feel it, but just because they may not feel it does not change the fact that the hostility is there. Read **V. 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.**” This is a very strong statement.

Let us begin by considering the first two words of **V. 4** “**You adulteresses.**” James, with these two words, makes it very clear that he has stopped analyzing the sinful implications of the difficulties that his readers were experiencing with each other and is now preparing them, through a sharp rebuke, for repentance.

How does James begin the rebuke? He begins by addressing certain professing believers among his readers as “adulteresses.” Adultery is the sin of violating the marriage covenant by having sexual intimacy with someone other than your spouse. If this is what James means by these words, then are we to conclude that only certain women in the church have broken their covenant and not certain men as well, because he does not address those certain readers as “adulterers and adulteresses”? Of course not! This very conclusion explains why the KJV translation translates this verse “you adulterers and adulteresses”, but this particular translation has very poor textual support. By far the best rendering of the Greek text is exactly what we have seen.

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In referring to “**adulteresses**,” James uses the term metaphorically in a way that his Jewish readers would clearly understand. James is not talking about sexual adultery but spiritual adultery, which is commonly used in the OT and Gospel periods to refer to the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel.

Spiritual adultery in the OT (Jer. 3:8, Ezek. 16:32; Hos. 1:2).

Through Jeremiah, the Lord said in **Jer. 3:8**, “**And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.**” Who is the husband in this passage who has given his wife a “**writ of divorce**”? It is the Lord. And why does he give this “writ of divorce”? Because of Israel’s adulteries.

In **Ezekiel 16:32**, He spoke of Judah as an “**adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband.**” Who in the context of this verse is the husband? It is the Lord.

In **Hos. 1:2** the Lord commanded Hosea: “**Go take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land (that is Israel) commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.**” Who has Israel been unfaithful too? It was to the Lord.

Israel, because of their covenants, had a very special relationship with the Lord. And when they broke those covenants the Lord compared them to an unfaithful wife.

It is very interesting to note that nowhere in the Scriptures do we find the terms “adulterer” or “adulteresses” used figuratively of Gentiles. Why? Because only Israel had a covenant relationship with God. Gentiles could be spiritual fornicators, as it were, but not adulterers.

What was the primary behavior by Israel during the time of the prophets that brought the charge of spiritual adultery against them? Worship of idols was the primary cause for the charge of spiritual adultery by the prophets on behalf of the Lord.(Ezek.16:6-22). Listen to this very poignant condemnation of the nation of Israel and her idolatrous practices in **Ezek. 16:6-22**. This is rather a lengthy passage of Scripture but it is an important passage. It is important because it hopefully helps us to see the distress that the Lord experiences when those He has chosen to love spurn Him and turn their back on Him.

(6) When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you while you were in your blood, “Live!’ (7) I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall, and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare. (8) Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,” declares the Lord God. (9) “Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. (10) I also clothed you with embroidered cloth, and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

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(11) And I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands, and a necklace around your neck. (12) I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. (13) Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. (14) Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,” declares the Lord God.” The Lord was deeply committed to the nation of Israel and had a passionate love for her. Now listen to what then happens.

(15) "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passerby who might be willing. (16) And you took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors, and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen. (17) You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them. (18) Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them. (19) Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil, and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for soothing aroma; so it happened,” declares the Lord God.” Some people, even professing believers, sometimes lose track of the fact that the Lord, though high and lifted up, is somehow impervious from feeling pain, sorrow or even grief. But this is not so! The pain that we feel when our wife or husband rejects our love, while embracing the affection of someone else, runs deep. Have you seen the impact of an adulteress relationship on the victimized spouse? It is devastating. All of their hopes and dreams, all that they have built their lives around, suddenly comes crashing down and seems to them to be broken into a million different pieces. It is as if they have had their heart ripped out of them. And if this is true for ourselves, how much more so for the Lord. The nation of Israel by their idolatrous practices caused the Lord incredible pain.

Spiritual adultery in the Gospel period (Matt. 12:39; 16:4).

Worship of human traditions was the primary cause of spiritual adultery in the gospel period.

Even though the idolatrous practices of Israel were the primary cause for the charge of spiritual adultery to be brought against them during the time of the prophets, it was not in the time of Christ. The nation of Israel, during the time of Christ, had fully and totally rejected the practice of idolatry, and yet they were still charged by Christ with spiritual adultery. Jesus spoke of the Jews of his time as an **“evil and adulterous generation”** which we see in **Matt. 12:39** and again in **Matt. 16:4**. Why did Christ make this charge? Christ charged the Jews most, even those who were religious during His time, with spiritual adultery, because even though they had turned away from idols, they bowed themselves to human traditions rather than to the Lord and His Word (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). So again the Lord is the spurned lover.

This is the way it was, but now we see another accusation of spiritual adultery being leveled against the covenant people of God in this passage; not against the nation of Israel, because they have been temporarily set aside from being an active player in God’s program, but rather against those who are professing to be under what Christ referred to as the New Covenant in His blood.

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Not against Israel but rather against those who are professing to be a part of the church. This brings us to the rebuke of spiritual adultery in James 4:4-6.

The primary cause of spiritual adultery in the NT period against certain members of the professing church based on James 4:1-6 is “Friendship with the World.” This brings us to spiritual adultery in the church age.

Just as OT Israel proved themselves unfaithful to their covenantal relationship to God by bowing to idols; just as Jews in the Gospel period proved themselves unfaithful to their covenantal relationship to God by bowing to human traditions, the church today is being threatened with unfaithfulness as certain professing Christians are bowing down before the values and the thinking of the world, and if we are not careful we might find ourselves guilty of being adulteresses. And this is an act of HOSTILITY.

Let us look at the question that James asks “**Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**”

The noun “friendship” (PHILIA) occurs only here in the NT, but the kindred word “friend” (PHILOS) is common; both come from the common Greek verb PHILEO which means “to love, to have affection for”; it also means “to kiss” as an indication of affection.

The “world” (KOSMOS) does not refer to the physical earth or universe but rather to the man-centered, Satan-directed system of this present age, which has as its central aim self-enjoyment and self-aggrandizement in disregard of or in open rebellion against God.

There are many indications that we have begun to act as a friend of the world. One of those ways which we have already seen is turmoil in relationships. Turmoil naturally follows when we bow to the values and the thinking of the world; as we seek to serve ourselves and our interests.

Be careful not to take the turmoil that you may be experiencing with others or within yourself lightly. It could very well be indicating to you that you in fact are carrying on an affair with the world, and have become hostile toward God.

Sometimes people would want to play this down. They might say, “Yes, I am having problems with certain people.” They might confess that they are having certain significant internal conflicts. But they will adamantly proclaim that they have no problems with God. In fact, they may try to hold on to the thought in the midst of all this turmoil that they are a friend of God.

Sometimes those guilty of sexual adultery will want to be viewed not only as a friend of their “lover” but they also want to be viewed as a friend of their “betrayed spouse.” This is very twisted thinking. The truth is, they are not in any way a friend of the betrayed spouse, but an enemy, and this is exactly how God views it when a professing believer begins to flirt with friendship with the world.

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Let us finish reading the rest of the verse, **“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.”**

CONCLUSION

Every day the world, as I have just shared with you, is speaking, calling us to pursue pleasure, comforts, prestige, etc. When you turn on your radio, when you watch your television, when you read your newspapers, when you talk to the vast majority of the people of this world, they are representing a man-centered, Satan-directed system. Every time we allow ourselves to be seduced by the world’s thinking and by its system, we have betrayed the Lord and have committed spiritual adultery. We have plunged the dagger of ingratitude into His heart and we have acted not as His friend but as His enemy.

This is why it is so important for us to be fervent in prayer, and purpose ourselves as we are praying to be properly focused. We need to honor the instructions that Christ gave to us in His model prayer; “Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name (not our name), Thy kingdom come (not our kingdom come), Thy will be done (not my will be done) on earth as it is in heaven.....”, and that we will gladly do this as a loving response for the love that he has so gloriously poured out upon us.