

## FAITH IN ACTION DOES NOT LOVE THE WORLD

**Greetings:** To “love the world” can look many ways for different people. *For God so loved the world...* is not the kind of love of world that is in play here. World in this context are the values, standards, and operations that one day will all be done away with. The world can also imply the fleeting character of life’s riches and pleasures and the vanity of pursuing such goals at the peril of eternity. Jesus gives an example in the Sermon on the Mount of one *laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. For no one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon.* James, the bondservant of Christ, clearly states the same intent in today’s lesson, *Faith in Action Does Not Love the World.*

**JAMES 4:1-6** What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

The passage in these six verses gives insight concerning the fallen nature of man, but the question asked in verse 1 is specifically to the Christian. These verses are not an indictment on those who have never obeyed the gospel (that comes later). It is the Christian who has taken on the name of Christ, and as the collective body of Christ is called the church, which is the bride of Christ. James is admonishing the bride to consider carefully any “ruling passions” that can lead to spiritual adultery. God’s desire is for us, and ours should be for Him as well. Is the goal to please ourselves, or God? This lesson helps us examine this ongoing inward battle.

### PLEASURES CAN LEAD TO FIGHTS AND QUARRELS... 4:1-3

- Fighting and quarreling in the house
  - Is this physical quarreling or spiritual quarreling?
  - Recognize that the word you(r) is plural throughout this text. This should impact the way we understand these scriptures.
  - Unfortunately, elders and ministers can spend inordinate amounts of time trying to put out fires between Christians or within families. Quarrels and strife are completely out of place in the Christian family.
- How pleasures can be the source of inward conflict

- Pleasure, or passion, is a strong desire: what is enjoyable to natural sense to satisfy the physical appetite.
- Pleasure {*hedone*} is where hedonism is derived.
- The Greek word *hedone* is mentioned 5 times in the New Testament—always in a negative light. **Luke 8:14, Titus 3:3, 2 Peter 2:13**
- Does this mean we should be as certain Gnostics or Puritans and avoid all pleasure? (Then forgive me for that juicy steak I had last night.)
- It is dangerous trying to satisfy your own desires, while God is the only One who can truly satisfy. Will your “ruling passions” be more important than God’s will?

❖ **At what point does the pursuit of pleasure become sinful?**

- Why you do not have.
  - Compare verse 2 with the concept taught by Jesus in Matthew 5:21-22. Then read James this way— *You lust and do not have: so you (get angry with your brother)*.
  - Now compare verse 3 with Matthew 7:7-8. What point is James making?
  - **Proverbs 30:15** states, *The leech has two daughters, “Give [it to me]” “Give [it to me]”*. The Gimme, Gimme attitude never gets. We are bad about this in just wanting and wanting, more and more. Materialism as well as the desire for power, respect, honor, popularity, and the like can overtake us. James is asking us to examine our desires.
  - It is not God’s will to answer prayer that enables sinful behavior.

**WE ARE CALLED OUT OF SPIRITUAL ADULTERY... 4:4-5**

- What happens when the bride of Christ falls in love with the world?
  - Jesus called the people, *An evil and adulterous generation*. **Matthew 12:39; 16:4**
  - O.T. prophets also described the sins of the God’s people as adultery against God. **Jeremiah 2:23-5:19, Hosea 2:2-23, Ezekiel 6:9**
  - Are we being pure and faithful to Jesus?
- Friendship with the world is hostility toward God.
  - What does it mean to have friendship with the world?
  - James does not mean that you cannot have friends who are not Christians (cf **1 Corinthians 5:9-13**). This concept is not about individuals.
  - Friendship with the world is to adopt the world’s values and standards. It is to adopt what the world wants instead of choosing God’s divine ways and will.
  - Friendship with the world is to put our passions and desires ahead of the passions and desires of God.



- Our God is a jealous God and wants our relationship with Him to be faithful.
  - *You shall have no other gods before Me...for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. Exodus 20:3-5, 34:14*
  - We must live by God's social and moral standards, not the world's standards! It is not okay to be like the world.
  - *He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.* (Consider different translations on how you want to bring this point home.)

## **BUT GOD GIVES A GREATER GRACE... 4:6**

God moves from stinging rebuke to open arms.

- The '*But*' of verse **6** is the gospel. God is not leaving us in our brokenness.
  - God can overcome our sinfulness. There is always enough grace to redeem us from what we have done because of Jesus.
  - Look at **Titus 3:3-8** and **Ephesians 2:1-10** and notice how the '*but*' conjunction takes us from one state to another.
  - It is not time to give up. It is time to seek grace.
- Therefore, let us humble ourselves before God.
    - Grace comes to those who humble themselves, not to the proud.
    - Those who will admit that they have not been living in a way God demands and come to the Father seeking grace will find amazing grace.
    - *Surely, He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3:34. NKJV) A salvific proverb quoted by both James (4:6) and Peter (1 Peter 5:5)*

### **Discussion Questions:**

- ❖ Do you struggle more with physical or spiritual quarreling?
- ❖ Do you experience conflict? Where is it present? What are you trying to fill?
- ❖ When you compare **Matthew 7:7-8** with **James 4:3**, what are your thoughts?
- ❖ How can a Christian pray wrongly?
- ❖ Have you ever felt that you were "friends" with the world? How did you move forward in the direction of "friendship" with God? Consider Abraham and Lot.
- ❖ Name some strategies that can allow us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world?
- ❖ In **James 4:6**, what is the relationship between grace and pride?

### **Prayer**



