

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

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

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. 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 which is one of seven different tests that we have already seen in this epistle.

But how can we tell if we have in fact been contaminated by the world? How can we tell if we have in fact become a friend of the world? 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.

The very first conflict that we looked at in this passage of Scripture was “conflict with others.” Let us look at the first part of **James 4:1** “**What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?.....**” Why do certain churches have conflicts? Why do Christian families have conflicts? It is because they have become contaminated by the world. It is because they have begun to manifest a friendship with the world. We may not be able to avoid conflict with others, whether that is in the church or in our families, but we do not have to contribute to them by thinking as the world thinks or acting like the world acts.

Where might this struggle between the influence of the world and the Word of God manifest itself in our relationship with others?

First of all the struggle between the world and the Word is demonstrated by how anger is viewed. The world tolerates the anger of man; the Scriptures do not. (Eph. 4:31, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”)

Secondly, another area where the struggle between the world and the Word may become evident is by how kindness is viewed.

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The world rejects the idea of showing unconditional kindness; the Scriptures do not (Eph 4:32, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”).

One of the ways that we can tell whether or not we have become contaminated by the world is if we find ourselves actually contributing to our conflicts with others. A second way that we can tell whether or not we have become contaminated by the world is if we find ourselves in conflict with ourselves.

Let us read James 4:1-3, **“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 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. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures (James 4:1b-3).”** James began this section of Scripture with a diagnostic question, **“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?”** ..... James now answers that question. The answer that James gives us is that the source of interpersonal conflict comes from internal personal conflict. In the process of giving this answer, James identifies for us three causes of internal conflict. It is important to note once again that each of these causes, as well as the results which we have already looked at, are clearly rooted in the attitudes and actions of the world.

The first cause is uncontrolled desire.

Look at end of V. 1 **“.... Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? .....”** The source of the quarrels and conflicts amongst them was not “noble individuals fighting for the truth.” They may have represented it that way, but that was not the true source. The source of the quarrels and conflicts amongst them was not an evil environment beyond their control. They may have represented it that way but that was not the true source either. Rather their conflicts and quarrels were coming from their own pursuit of what? Pleasure!!

“Pleasure” (HEDONON from which we get the word hedonist) denotes the enjoyment derived from the fulfillment of one’s desires or, as here, the craving for the pleasure itself.”

Is pleasure in and of itself wrong? And the answer is, “Of course not!.” Enjoying pleasure or even pursuing pleasure is not wrong in and of itself, but when the pursuit of pleasure becomes the driving force of your life then it is sin. **1 Tim. 6:17** makes this very clear: **“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”** Pleasure in and of itself is not wrong. The Lord has given us the ability to enjoy and to experience pleasure, but this should not be an excuse to make pleasure our god. And when certain pleasures take priority over obedience to the teachings of God’s Word and become uncontrolled desires, those pleasures become ungodly, which is certainly what James has in view here in this verse. Hopefully, each one of us here this weekend has come to understand that indulging our ungodly pleasures has a tremendous price tag.

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**Prov. 16:25** “There is a way which seems right to a man. But its end is the way of death.” The playboy philosophy of this world makes pleasure mankind’s chief end. But the way that seems so right to man, which is the pursuit of pleasure irregardless of the teachings of God’s Word is the way of death. When enslaved to the Lord we are blessed, but those who choose to be enslaved to pleasure are cursed.

God has given mankind the capacity to pursue and to enjoy pleasure but the Lord never intended that the pursuit or the experience of pleasure would become our God. But in fact this is what has happened to mankind. The pursuit of pleasure is more important to the world than obedience to the Scriptures. Those whose lives are characterized by conflict with others have been vanquished by an army of ungodly pleasures. How do we know this?

Look at the next phrase, “**What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures** (those ungodly desires) **that wage war ...**”

The word translated “that wage war” (STRATEUOMENON) depicts these ungodly pleasures as soldiers carrying on a military campaign aimed at securing the satisfaction of their craving. It is this successful military campaign by ungodly pleasures that James identifies as the cause of their quarrels and conflicts among his readers.

But where is this military campaign taking place? Look at the rest of the verse, “**What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?**”

When James speaks of “members” he is not talking about “church members,” but to the mental and physical elements of the body, which contain man’s fallen flesh or humanness.

Let me ask you a question. Are you presently experiencing within you a warfare being conducted by an army of ungodly pleasures? The answer to that question should be what? Yes!! Whether you are saved or not saved your answer to that question should be the same.

Let us first of all consider the warfare with ungodly pleasures in the unsaved.

The unsaved work at rejecting God and His standards of righteousness (Roms. 1:18,19). Listen to **Romans 1:18-19**, “**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.**” The unsaved are not attempting to see things as God sees them but they are working very hard to hold onto their view of themselves and the world that they live in.

But no matter how hard the unsaved may try to suppress the awareness of sin, they will fail. In that failure they will experience guilt and will therefore have an awareness of a personal battle with evil desires (Rom. 2:14-15). This is reinforced for us in **Rom. 2:14-15**, “**For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law are a law to themselves,**

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**(15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.**” The unsaved are striving to suppress the truth so that they can live pretty much as they have always lived. The unsaved are striving to suppress the truth so that they can live like they please without guilt, but they will fail. Why? Because the Law of God, which has been written in their heart will activate their accusing conscience.

Are the unsaved aware of a struggle between the truth of God’s Word and the ungodly desires and cravings that are carrying on a military campaign within the members of their body? And the answer is, Yes! They may not describe it that way; that is how the Scriptures would describe it.

What is so tragic about their situation is that though they may put out from time to time a sufficient effort to win an occasional battle with an evil desire, which they themselves see as an evil desire, they will lose the war!! Why? Because they do not have sufficient resources.

Let us now consider the warfare with ungodly pleasures in the saved. If you are here this weekend and you possess living faith, if you are here this weekend and possess saving faith, if you are here this weekend and you are genuinely born again, you will also be aware of this warfare between the righteous standards of God’s Word and the ungodly pleasures that are carrying on a military campaign in the members of your bodies.

You might ask, “How can this be? How can we who have been redeemed from the slave market of sin still be at war with ungodly pleasures?” The reason is quite simple. Though we have in fact been set free from sin in the inner man, so that we no longer are repressing the truth in unrighteousness; though we have in fact been set free from sin in the inner man so that we now enjoy an appetite for righteousness, we still are in possession of these unredeemed bodies that we inherited from Adam. Therefore, we will continue to battle the sin that inhabits the members of our body (Rom. 7:14-25).

Listen to **Romans 7:14-25**. This is Paul speaking: **“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. (15) For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. (16) But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. (17) So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. (19) For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. (20) But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. (21) I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. (22) For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, (23) but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.”** Paul is not an unsaved man but a saved man, yet he is very aware of the warfare that is taking place in his body. In fact, I am sure he is far more aware of this warfare than a person who is unsaved. Why? Because his redeemed spirit wants to please God and uphold the teachings of God’s Word. And I believe that the same thing is true of every true born-again believer.

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I have talked with many so-called Christians who find it very difficult to admit to any struggles with sinful desires. You ask them "How goes the battle?" and they don't even know what you are talking about. Or, they understand what you are talking about but off the top of their heads they cannot think of any specific battles that they are presently fighting with sin. This is not good!! The saved individual should have a very heightened sense of his personal sinfulness and be able to tell you exactly where the battles for personal holiness are being fought.

Quite in contrast with the begrudging and doomed battle that the unsaved are fighting with sin, the spirited and intense battle for righteousness being conducted by the saved will be triumphant.

Listen to Paul once more in Romans 7 as he cries out in desperation after he has contemplated his lack of holiness in **Romans 7:14-23**. Listen to these wonderful words: **Romans 7:24-25**, **"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"** Christ will not only presently strive with us in our struggle for holiness, He will ultimately deliver us from our unredeemed flesh when He gives to us a glorified body.

### CONCLUSION

Everyone here this weekend certainly should be aware of the struggle with ungodly desires. This is true whether you are saved or not saved. But the struggle is quite different between the unsaved and the saved. The struggle that the unsaved will have is dealing with the guilt that results from the truth that they were unable to repress. The struggle that the saved will actually have is putting away the evil desires and ungodly pleasures that they are actively and conscientiously exposing in their lives as they pursue holiness.

The first cause for the conflicts and quarrels among the readers of this epistle James gives to us is **UNCONTROLLED DESIRE**. When we are unable to successfully wage a battle against the army of ungodly pleasures that are waging war in our unredeemed flesh in this body which we have inherited from Adam, it will inevitably spill over into conflicts with others.