

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

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

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. We have called this test the "Friendship with the World test."

In today's world truly free people are exceptions. Most are like marionettes suspended and animated by a thousand strings of purported "pleasure." Some bounce puppet-like on the strings of alcohol and drugs. Others on the strings of pleasure-giving technology: cars, hot tubs, water beds or stereos. Still others lay lifeless until they are "brought to life" by sports and entertainment. Millions of people rise and shower, drive their cars, walk the streets, ride elevators, return home and "go out" in apparent freedom while actually never making a move not dictated by the tug of their puppeteer, which is the Satanic world system.

The only people who can be truly free of this world system and its voracious appetite for pleasure-seeking are Christians. Christians have been set free from their enslavement to the lusts of the flesh and the Satanic world system and are now free to live their lives pursuing righteousness and service to Christ, but if they are not careful and get too friendly with this present Satanic world system, they can once again get tangled up in the strings of its marionettes, living their lives very much as the unsaved world.

This is a terrible thing. But how can we know if this has begun to happen to us?

One of the ways that we can know if this has happened ; one way for us to know if we have begun to become a friend of the world, is if our various relationships are characterized by turmoil.

Turmoil in our relationship with others (V. 1)

Turmoil in our relationship with ourselves (VV. 1-3)

Turmoil in our relationship with the Lord (VV. 4-6)

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### 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) “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.”** When we become friendly with the world; when we get tangled up in the strings of the Satanic world system and it’s voracious appetites for pleasure, and neglect the Lord, who truly is the lover of our soul, and His word, we have acted hostilely toward Him. We may not feel as if we have acted hostilely toward Him, but that is exactly what we have done. If this happens we have committed “spiritual adultery”.

This is why James addresses certain readers of his as “adulteresses.” If a professing Christian commits spiritual adultery, does this mean that he is unsaved? Does this mean that he does not possess living or saving faith? Of course not! It means that he or she is very messed up, and hopefully if they understand the severity of their transgression and the pain that they are inflicting on the Lord, they will quickly repent and once again return to Him. This is the very point of the rebuke that James is giving. He is not approaching these professing Christians as unsaved but rather he is approaching these professing Christians as unfaithful and is calling them to repentance.

But what happens if they do not repent? What happens if these professing Christians continue to choose to carry on their adulteress affair with the world? What does the passage tell us? “Therefore whoever wishes (or chooses) to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

James is making it very clear that those who choose to persist in their flirtatious and adulterous relationship with the world are in effect declaring themselves enemies of God (V. 4). What is the significance of this statement? To declare ourselves an enemy of God is to in effect declare ourselves unsaved. Listen to Romans 5:9-11, “ (9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (10) For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (11) And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” The unsaved, before they receive Christ, are the enemies of God. After they receive Christ they are not the enemies of God. To persist in choosing a flirtatious and adulterous relationship with the world identifies us as an enemy of God and therefore identifies us as unsaved (Rom. 5:9-11).

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As we begin to become friendly with the world, it will cause turmoil in our relationship with others, with ourselves, and with the Lord. This upset in our relationship with the Lord will be manifested in three different ways. First of all, in hostility toward the Lord (V. 4). Secondly, in disregard for Scripture.

### **DISREGARD FOR SCRIPTURE**

James has just made it very clear to his readers and particularly to those certain readers who have begun to flirt with the world, that those kinds of flirtatious behaviors are totally unacceptable to Him. This certainly should not surprise his readers. Why? Because the Scriptures speak about the Lord's jealousy. Let us read V. 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?" Professing Christians who continue to flirt with the world are not only acting hostilely but are also choosing to ignore, to disregard what the Scriptures teach about the Lord's jealousy.

Let us take a closer look at V. 5 This is one of the most difficult passages in James, for two reasons. First, it's statement that the "Scripture says", followed by what appears to be a specific quote, leads us to look for an Old Testament source, but none can be found in canonical (or even non-canonical) writings. So we conclude that James probably is referring to the general theme of God's jealousy as it is expressed in various places in the Old Testament when he says, "the Scripture speaks" (Exod. 20:4,5; 34:14; Zech. 8:2).

**Exod. 20:4-5, "(4) You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God ....."**

**Exod. 34:14, "For you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."**

**Zech. 8:2, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her."** The theme of God's jealousy is well developed in the OT and it appears that it is this general theme of jealousy that James is referring to in V. 5.

This passage is also difficult because there is a dispute over how this verse ought to be translated. The problem surfaces in two specific ways. First of all, the translations are divided over whether the word "spirit" refers to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit. If it is the human spirit, as the NIV has it, the verse refers to the universal tendency we all have toward envy and jealousy in respect to each other. If this were the best translation it would in effect be saying, "Don't you know that you yourselves are living proof of the veracity of Scripture, which clearly teaches that the natural man has a spirit of envy?" And certainly I believe we all can see how that might fit into the flow of this passage, particularly when we look at VV. 1-3 which speaks of the difficulty that certain people are having with themselves and others. Though this translation would certainly fit, I don't believe that it is the best fit.

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I believe that the reference to the “spirit” is a reference to the Holy Spirit rather than to the human spirit because it best fits with the issue of hostility toward God which was introduced in V.4. Those who are flirting with the world are acting hostile toward the Lord and they are acting hostilely toward the Lord because they are totally disregarding the Word and what the Word says about the Lord’s jealousy. If a wife makes it clear to her husband that she is jealous for his affections and he ignores her and goes out and flirts with other women, he is acting hostilely toward her.

Now let us ask this question: Who specifically is identified in V. 5 as experiencing these intense feelings of jealousy? ..... “He jealousy desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.” It would appear that the Lord is experiencing these intense feelings of jealousy in respect to the Spirit. If this were the human spirit being referred to in this verse we would have no problem in understanding what James meant. The Lord certainly would be jealous for our human spirit or in other words He would be jealous for our personal devotion to Him in contrast with our flirtations with the world. But since we have concluded that the spirit is not the human spirit but the Holy Spirit, this statement is, I believe, extremely confusing. How can the Lord be jealous for His own Spirit? I believe we can solve this problem by realizing that this is not the best translation of the verse.

I believe that the NKJV translation is by far a better translation which says, “The Spirit He caused to live in us longs jealously.” What is the difference between the two translations? The main verb is “desires” or “longs.” The question that the translators had to answer is: What is the subject of the main verb, is it “the Lord” or is it “the Spirit”? The KJ translators, the NIV translators, the NKJV translators all concluded that the Spirit was the subject of the main verb and I believe that this is absolutely the best translation. Therefore having concluded that the reference to the “spirit “ is a reference to the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit and also concluding the Spirit is the subject of the main verb and not it’s object, I would encourage you to write in your Bible, "NKJV" followed by these words “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.” James is not saying that the Lord is longing, but what? The Spirit is longing or yearning.

When we as professing believers begin to act friendly with the world, we are acting hostilely toward the Lord because we are disregarding the Scriptures and demonstrating that we do not care about the Lord’s feelings. We do not care that He is stirred to jealousy. We do not care even in spite of His expressions of love toward us.

V. 5 is given to us to accentuate our callousness in light of His incredible love if we choose to become friendly with the world. We see the love of God highlighted for us in two different ways. First of all in the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence. What does the verse say according to the NKJV? “The Spirit He caused to live in us.” The Lord, in His love, has joined Himself to us in the person of the Holy Spirit, and in addition to this we have through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit become partakers of the divine nature according to 2 Pet. 1:4. We also see the intensity of the Lord’s love for us in the intensity of the feelings that are stirred up in the Holy Spirit who is indwelling us, when we choose to carry on a flirtatious relationship with the world.

What do the Scriptures say about the Lord’s jealousy? The Scriptures are clear the Lord is a jealous God. And when the Spirit of God comes into our lives, He will not sit there unmoved by our flirtatious indiscretions (V. 5).

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Hopefully this thought would not only be a comforting thought but a life changing thought.

Understanding that the Holy Spirit's jealousy for us is what is meant in this passage opens a heart-changing truth to us: even when we sin we are greatly loved, for jealousy is an essential element of true love.

Let me ask you a question: If you were to get married and deeply loved your spouse, how would you feel if you went out to a restaurant and, whenever given the opportunity, your spouse began flirting with whoever happened to come by? Wouldn't you feel jealous? Of course you would! Should you feel badly about this feeling? No! You should not feel badly at all. Jealousy is an essential element of true love.

If you are a man and you have a spouse who actually feels badly when they think that you have been flirting, and she shares her feelings with you, don't attack your spouse. Thank them! What would be better? Having a wife who doesn't care what you do with whomever you do it, or one who jealousy watches over you with a tender jealousy? I believe it would be the latter.

I am not saying that jealous feelings are righteous feelings. I am saying that jealous feelings, when it involves indiscretions of someone who is joined to you by a sacred covenant, are righteous feelings. I believe that this is true when someone acts unfaithfully in light of His marriage vows or when a believer acts unfaithfully in light of His declaration that Jesus is His Lord and Savior.

We are the brides of Christ, and the Holy Spirit does not want us to go somewhere else to "have our needs met." And when we do, it stirs Him up and it deeply grieves Him. If we can truly appreciate the Lord's affection for us and understand the strong painful feelings of jealousy that are stirred up when we become flirtatious with the world, it should be an effective tool to keep us from wandering.

And if we in fact do this, then are taking to heart what the Scriptures very forcefully and powerfully proclaim.

### CONCLUSION

Turmoil with the Lord is manifested first of all by hostility toward God, which we saw in V. 3. How is our hostility toward God manifested? It is manifested when we disregard what the Scriptures teach. More specifically, in light of what this passage teaches, it is manifested when we disregard what the Scriptures teach about how friendship with the world stirs up such painful feelings of jealousy in the Spirit of God, who indwells us.

How do you explain your life? Is your life being lived for Christ or is your life being lived for the satisfaction of your own fleshly pleasures?