



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

TRUE FAITH IS NOT A FRIEND OF THIS WORLD-PART 3: JAMES 4:1-6

TO: COLORADO LEGISLATORS, SPOUSES AND THE GOVERNOR

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*James writes in chapter 4 to people who desired their way and not God's, seeking their pleasures and not God's. That's the way of the world. 2 Corinthians 5:9 says this, "Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." What is your ambition, your pursuit in life? Is it to please God or yourself? The disastrous results of a self seeking, sinful life reveals the tragic, spiritual condition of one in need of a Savior. Our greatest pursuit is knowing, serving and glorifying God forever.*

## I. A SHARPE REBUKE - JAMES 4:4

*James 4:1-4: "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. 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."*

James is a very practical book instructing how to live out that true, genuine faith which God has worked in us. (Philippians 2:12-14) Here in James 4, he wastes no words dealing directly with sin resulting from the pursuit of worldly, selfish personal pleasure rather than seeking God and what pleases Him. James deals with the internal conflict resulting from pursuing the desires of our flesh which wage war within our very souls and the external conflicts of quarrels, dissensions and every evil practice as outcomes of seeking self gratification. Galatians 5:16 calls us to "walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh." Our flesh desires, but does not desire to please or seek God. Peter addressed this conflict in 1 Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul." We will have to deal with our flesh until the day we die. The only answer to the flesh is Romans 7:24-25, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

## A. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD/HOSTILITY TO GOD - JAMES 4:4A

*James 4:4a: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?..."*

We see an abrupt transition from "brothers" and "my dear brothers" to "You adulteresses" as James deals with the true condition of people in the church with a fierce indictment of their sin. Friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. Adultery refers to the sin of violating a marriage vow through sexual intimacy with another. They would have understood exactly what James was referring to. In the Old Testament, God frequently referred to the spiritual infidelity of His people Israel as adultery. (Ezekiel 16:32,38; Jeremiah 3:8, 20; 2 Chronicles 21:11,13; Psalm 73:27, Isaiah 57: 3.) In Hosea 2:5-7, God even goes to the extent of asking His prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute to painfully reveal Israel, God's chosen people, as unfaithful to Him. This was strong imagery describing the broken covenant relationship by His people whom He loved. James uses "adulteresses" to label his readers, rebuking all who were unfaithful to their covenant with Jesus Christ. The serious significance of their sin was clear. Jesus Himself spoke to unbelieving Israel calling them in Matthew 12:34, "an evil and adulterous generation." The

same is true today as James writes. There are those who claim to love God and go to church and yet they have no saving relationship with God. He is neither Savior nor Lord for they seek to serve their own pleasures. James calls this spiritual adultery directing his rebuke to those who were unfaithful to their covenant with Jesus Christ. Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." James makes it unmistakably clear to all that there is no middle ground. You cannot serve two gods. You cannot be a friend of this world and say you love God.

### 1. "DON'T YOU KNOW"- JAMES 4:4A

James asks another rhetorical question calling for an affirmative response from his readers, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" Clearly there were those in the church whose lives were consumed by their selfish lusts, craving for what they desired. This sadly represents the opposite focus of true believers who live to pursue God and please Him alone. James makes clear that by indulging in pleasures of a sinful world, they are unfaithful to the very Lord they have made a covenant with and commitment to. He addresses their selfishness, their sinful lust whether it was for prestige, money, position, power, affections of others we do not know, but, the context makes clear this was a seeking to be gratified by lustful desires.

### 2. "FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD"- JAMES 4:4A

**%friendship+Greek %philia,** often rendered love, indicates affection, an attitude of kindly regard and affection.

What does it mean to be a friend of the world? The word "friendship" simply means to have an affection for, a kind regard. The issue is what you have a fond affection for. In John 15:13-19, Jesus taught about love using the two types of love. First is "agapao" which refers to the unconditional, sacrificial love demonstrated by God which we are called to. Jesus uses the word "friends" Greek word "philos" to refer to those who have received Him as Lord and Savior, those who truly love Him in 15:13-15. Then in 13:18-19 Jesus says, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Clearly, the world is the hostile enemy of God and those who love Jesus Christ cannot love the world since the world hates Jesus. In 1 John 2:15-17, John commands us not to love the world or the things in the world. And yet, that is exactly what James is rebuking his readers for. James uses "friendship" to describe the affection some in the church had for the world and its pleasures.

**%world+Greek %kosmos,** refers to the system of humanity, not the created world but the spiritual reality of the man centered, Satan directed system of this present age which is hostile to God and God's people.<sup>1</sup>

The object of their love, their friendship was the "world". They had an affection for the "world" that is hostile to God. They were demonstrating allegiance to the world with its self fulfillment, self indulgence and self

## BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAY @ 7:15 AM, RM 0109 – COLORADO STATE CAPITOL

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satisfaction. Keep in mind that James is not referring to believers who fall into sin occasionally. He is referring to those who call themselves Christians and yet have a longing for the world; its attractions and self-serving pursuits.

### 3. "HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD"- JAMES 4:4A

*James 4:4a: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?..."*

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**%hostility+**Greek **%echthra**, "hatred, denotes an attitude of hostility, the opposite of friendship.

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James makes it clear that having a friendship with the world is incompatible with a true believer whose loyalties will be to God. In fact, James says there is no middle ground; you are either God's friend or His enemy. James makes it clear that that hostility and hatred is toward God. The focus of the "world" is self-enjoyment and this is in disregard to God. The world system is hostile to God and so Paul said this to believers in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed..." The hostility is not on God's side, but rather from the one who makes himself a friend of the world. The friendship with the world reveals and points to hostility toward God on man's part, not God's. Total allegiance cannot be pledged to God **and** the world for they are in opposition to one another. Romans 8:6-8 says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

### B. FRIEND OF THE WORLD MAKES HIMSELF AN ENEMY OF GOD - JAMES 4:4B

*James 4:4: "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."*

James begins his next truth with "Therefore". This suggests a solemn fact that will be a logical consequence to their friendship with the world.

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**%wishes+**Greek **%boulomai**, "more than just a wanting desire or a wish to be fulfilled, stronger idea of choosing one thing over another, individually decided, the verb shows the decision to be made is a matter of the will.

**%makes himself+**Greek **%kathistemi**, "means to make, ordain, a conscious intent, not just will but will with premeditation.

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So the "wishing" is a deliberate choice of choosing the world over God. By deliberately choosing the world, that reveals a willful intent. Whoever wishes to be a friend of God then, is willfully with premeditation, whether he knows it or not, has chosen to make himself an enemy of God. Whenever the world's allurements lead a man or a woman to resolve deliberately to foster friendship with the world, he becomes guilty of unfaithfulness to God.<sup>2</sup> Adamson says this, "He who determines to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God, not because God hates him, but because he hates God."<sup>3</sup> And James' words here point to a continuing

condition, desiring the world and the pursuit of it. It means that this person has taken his stand against God, as His enemy.

What does it mean to be the enemy of God? There is no neutral position here. If you don't belong to God, you belong to the world and you are in need of repentance. Choosing the world reveals a deliberate enmity toward God. By a man or woman's decision, they will assume a relationship to God that is the exact opposite of that recorded of Abraham, who was acknowledged as the "friend of God" when he was saved.<sup>4</sup> James 2:23 says, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God." Before we were saved, we were enemies of God. But salvation changed that as Colossians 1:21-22 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you..." When we are saved, we no longer live for ourselves but for God. (1 Peter 4:2-3) Colossians 3:2 calls us to "Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth."

Now, most unbelievers wouldn't think of themselves as enemies of God, yet they don't have a saving relationship to Jesus Christ. They want a god of their own making. These could be very moral, nice, friendly, good people. Maybe they are so good they don't even feel a need for salvation. But that salvation is what God credits to our account as righteousness and then declares us justified before Him. But if God is not your Master, your Lord, then you have made the decision to be friends with the world and thereby have become an enemy of God by your choosing. To cultivate a relationship with the world reveals not just a compromise, but an enemy of God. That is serious and has eternal consequences.

Some folks may call themselves Christians, they are part of a church, maybe even in leadership and yet their life demonstrates an unwillingness to turn from their sin. They give lip service to Christianity but don't possess a real and genuine faith.

Yes, even Christians can be drawn to the desires of the world, its ways and self-gratification...but they can never be content there. Believers do stumble in many ways, but there must eventually be a turning from that sin in repentance to God. We must never forget that being in friendship with the world is being in hostility toward God.

Worldliness centers around man and not God. Do you have an affection for the world in any areas of your life? Are you living for your pleasures and not God's? The believer's first enemy is the flesh and its desires. The believer's second enemy is the man-centered, self-seeking world. The warning from 2 Corinthians 11:3 is appropriate here, "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." That's worth contemplating!

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.193.

<sup>2</sup>Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 229.

<sup>3</sup>Adamson, James B., *The Epistle of James*. Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976. Pg.170.

<sup>4</sup>Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 229.