



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A MESSAGE OF REBUKE, REPROOF AND A GREATER GRACE: JAMES 4:1-6

COLORADO

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We have learned from James 3 that a true believer will have a life of growing righteousness that is sown in peace and is sowing in peace while living in the midst of a turbulent, strife filled world. One who possesses a real and genuine faith will possess a wisdom from above revealed through a righteous, selfless and peaceful life. This one will be marked by peace and cooperation rather than strife. The character of this wise person will be consistent, stable, trustworthy, and transparent. Their life will overflow with words and works of good deeds. They will be willing to extend mercy giving what is needed rather than what is deserved. They will be ready to cooperate when a better way is shown, approachable and willing to listen. They will be equitable and fair, courteous and considerate, pursuing peace but never at the expense of purity. They are not given to anger and strife, dissention and dispute but rather seek peace and cooperation. The true believer will be revealed through a righteous life that pursues and promotes peace. James 4 shows that a true believer will submit to God, living by this godly wisdom and is not a friend of this world or its wisdom.

I. REBUKE, REPROOF, A GREATER GRACE-JAMES 4:1-6

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? 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. 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."

A. CONFLICTS AND QUARRELS AMONG YOU - JAMES 4:1

James chapter 3 has laid down the foundation for believers to live and operate from a wisdom that comes from God. Worldly wisdom is evidenced by jealousy, selfish ambition and pride rooted in Satan's lies rather than God's truth. It stands in direct contrast to "wisdom that comes from above" characterized by humility and gentleness that's from God. Yet, as we move into James 4, it is clear that "believers" are operating from a worldly wisdom revealed by conflicts, envy, and selfishness leading to disorder, chaos and every evil practice. Relationships with one another were marked by "quarrels and conflicts". Moving from the picture of a life governed by heavenly wisdom to the appalling picture in the opening verses of chapter 4 is startling, but it demonstrates the need for this vigorous rebuke.¹ James proceeds by asking two questions that identify the real issues.

FIRST QUESTION: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" (James 4:1a) What causes fights and quarrels among them? The relationships among themselves were filled with violent, quarrelsome, self-seeking, strife-filled discord and struggle. And while it is true that some battles must be

fought, it must never be by sacrificing Christian principles. What causes such hostility among you who are called to love and live with a wisdom from above? (James 3:17-18) James answers this question by asking another.

SECOND QUESTION: "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" (James 4:1b) What is the source of all the strife and hostility being described... "your pleasures". Their personal, uncontrolled pursuit of fulfilling their fleshly desires is the source of such conflict. While this term is not used often in the New Testament, each occurrence is in the negative sense referring to the craving for pleasure, the strong desire to gratify self. (Luke 8:4, Titus 2:3, 2 Peter 2:23) This is a self love that stands in opposition to God Who calls on us to die to ourselves and live for Him

These self-seeking pleasures "wage war"; carry on a military campaign with the goal of securing the satisfaction of their craving. Where is this war being waged? James says "within your members". This war is taking place within you. The external conflict between people revealed the inner struggle taking place. Paul reproves the one who calls himself a believer yet is controlled by sin in 1 Corinthians 15:34. What does the world observe as they see you engaged at the Capitol? Are there conflicts and quarrels among you? What is the source? James moves on to look at their tragic results.

B. TRAGIC RESULTS OF SELFISH PLEASURE - JAMES 4:2-3

James 4:2-3 exposes the tragic **external** conflicts that result from pursuing selfish passions. James makes it clear that pursuing selfish, sinful pleasures wages an immense war within the believers' heart and these frustrated desires will be demonstrated externally as well. Their worldly passions for personal satisfaction reveal their tragic spiritual condition pursuing temporal, self-gratification and not true fulfillment that comes only from pleasing Jesus Christ. And their prayers reveal these tragic motives; asking merely for selfish motives. Prayer is not meant to serve our sinful lusts and desires. God is not some genie in the sky. These prayers receive no hearing from God. Their motives are selfish and worldly. They are asking for the purpose of personal indulgence. God gives us what we need and not what we greed.

This is so sad. These people desired their way and not God's, seeking their pleasures and not God's. That's the way of the world but what's the right motive? 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 a tragic spiritual condition of one in need of a Savior. Our greatest pursuit is knowing, serving and glorifying God forever.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL, ROOM 271

Colorado

A Message of Rebuke, Reproof and a Greater Grace...James 4:1-6 (Review)

C. A SHARPE REBUKE - JAMES 4:4

Here 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. 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; Isaiah 57: 3) 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. The serious significance of their sin was clear.

The same is true today as James writes. There are those who claim to love God and yet they have no saving relationship with Him. 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. You are either God’s friend or His enemy. The focus of the “world” is sinful, self-gratification in disregard to God. The world system is hostile to God and the hostility is not on God’s side, but rather from the one who makes himself a friend of the world. Friendship with the world reveals 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.”

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 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!

D. A STERN REPROOF, A GREATER GRACE - JAMES 4:5-6

They are living as though they can be friends with the world and love God at the same time. So the question is, does Scripture speak with purpose and authority or not? If it has no authority, then there can be no ultimate

demand on how we live. And it would seem that many who call themselves believers live as though God’s Word has no influence over their lives. James warns us not to be deceived for Scripture speaks with absolute authority admonishing all as it relates to practice and not just profession from our lips. James has issued a stinging rebuke for their flirtation with worldliness. And God tolerates no rival demanding total allegiance from His people. You cannot have a friendship with the world which amounts to spiritual adultery. Our flesh desires and in our sinful human condition, we tend toward fulfilling our sinful desires.

“But” in James 4:6, suggests a contrast between the yearning of the spirit that competes for our love and the gift of grace God gives enabling us to overcome our own sinful desires. James says God gives a “greater grace”. One must ask, greater than what? No matter what the desire or temptation from our flesh or the world, God gives us more grace to overcome those sinful, selfish desires and we can walk the way God calls us to. But this grace demands a response as James continues. That response is one of humility. The gift of God’s grace is conditioned by the attitude of our hearts. God’s grace demands a response, and that response cannot be one of pride. James says that “God is opposed to the proud”. This verb vividly pictures God as placing Himself in battle array against such an individual. God is the active antagonist of the proud and self-sufficient.² So God is stationed in full battle array against the proud. James makes it clear that God has taken up His station against the proud and arrogant sinner who exalts himself.

While God has taken up His station against the proud and arrogant sinner, James now offers encouragement for all who are humble. God will abundantly give His grace to those who have a humble heart. Grace is unmerited favor. It is favor from God that could never be earned or deserved. It is given by God to those who acknowledge their sinfulness and need of God. Those are the ones who are humble. The humble understand their dependence on God and like empty vessels, they are ready to receive His grace and help which goes far beyond what they deserve or expect.³

God gives grace to the humble. And though His grace is free, it is never intended to enable us to take our sin lightly. If we will simply humble ourselves, God will extend His great grace and mercy so undeserved to us who are in such great need. And this promise of grace is the basis for what follows in James 4:7-10; a message of hope and encouragement to all who will heed the call.

¹Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 219.

²Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 235.

³Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 236.