

Friendship with the World – James 4:1-12

Introduction

- Remember, how we speak and act in life is directly tied to our thinking and the Truth we speak in our hearts (or lack thereof).
- The ‘testing of our faith’ is happening within a fallen world as “friendship with the world is enmity (or hostility) with God” (v.4) – how will James deal with this reality and the importance of being a ‘doer of the Word’?
- James has provided the early believers with what they will need to succeed as “doers of the Word” in Chapters 1-3, now in Chapter 4 he will deal with the value of submission among the believers.

Submit with Contrition (4:1-17) – KEY QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to be ‘contrite’?
- How are submission and contrition connected in Scripture?

Turn Hatred to Humility (4:1-6)

- The appearance of conflict among the followers of Jesus stirred James to intense indignation – why? Because true followers of Jesus should be submitted to Christ and remain kind to one another.
- Simply put – we should ‘know better,’ because Jesus showed us a better way.
- (v. 1) So, where does conflict come from – from within, inner lusts and hedonism. We want to be ‘pleased’ (example: narcissism) - the battle within is waged in our hearts.
- (v. 2) The covetous nature of the sinful human heart stands at odds with ‘asking God’ from a pure heart. The result of the sinful heart is a lack of satisfaction, versus, the result of the pure heart asking God in humility is fullness of joy.
- (v. 3) **QUESTION:** How important are motives in our questions to God?
- Extremely important – in fact, God knows our motives and allows us to ‘squander’ our lives. Walvoord reminds us “God will never provide for ‘hedonistic squandering’”.
- (v. 4) In this verse, James’s transition is not the normal ‘my brothers,’ but ‘you adulterous people.’ We should be outraged with our lives when we are ‘friends with the world’ and we should be outraged when fellow Christians seem to discount the danger and error of living in a worldly manner. We are enemies with God when we are friends with the world.
- (v. 5) It can be helpful to interpret this verse with Proverbs 3:34 in mind (which James quotes in v. 6) – “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”. This context

helps us interpret v. 5 to mean ‘the spirit [human] which indwells you yearns to envy, but He [God] gives more grace.’

- (v. 6) The ‘resistance’ of God toward the proud is a militaristic meaning (literally to ‘battle against’).
- The cure for conflict is a humble spirit that is rewarded by God – this demonstrates how humility is connected to Divine justice.

Turn Judgment into Justice (4:7-12)

- (v. 7) We cannot submit to God if we are not committed to God; and, when committed to God fully we will resist (battle against) the devil.
- (v. 8) To draw near to God we must be cleansed from sin – remember, God and sin never go together. The cleansing here is ‘ceremonially’ understood by the Jewish audience – somewhat intuitive for their understanding/clarity.
- (v. 9) **QUESTION:** How should we feel when we realize we are sinners (or remain infatuated with the ‘world’)?
- **ANSWER:** We should be miserable and mourn and weep – obviously. Is this what was happening among the audience James is writing to (or to the modern setting)? No, there was arrogance and pride.
- **ANOTHER QUESTION:** Will God cleanse the heart of the arrogant and proud? No, because they are not humble enough to see the need for His cleansing. A contrite spirit of confession is paramount and fully necessary.
- (v. 10) There is an advantage to humility – the lifestyle of humility – it eventually will bring honor. This is not by ‘mans’ design; but by God’s design.
- (v. 11) If a follower of Jesus is humble, then they will not be quick to speak and judge others (1:19). Only the ‘lawgiver’ is qualified to judge based upon the law ultimately. Humility keeps our thinking correct (and in a healthy ‘fear’ of the LORD who will judge ALL THINGS).
- (v. 12) **QUESTION:** Are we able to ‘save’ and ‘destroy’ like God can? No. God is the author of Justice because only He has authority to give the perfect law and keep it.

Conclusion

- This passage uniquely admonishes the readers to intentionally withdraw from their friendship with the world and live in humility before, and submission to, God.
- As you reflect on this lesson, ask God to help you put away any remaining urges of worldly living that might be impeding your spiritual growth by humbly drawing near to Him.