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A0740 – October 7, 2007 – Jas 4:4-5 – There Is No Neutrality

James 4:4-6 Μοιχοὶ καὶ μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἐχθρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; Ὃς ἂν οὖν βουλευθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται. ⁵Ἡ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφὴ λέγει; Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκησεν ἐν ἡμῖν. ⁶Μεῖζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει, Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

James 4:4-6 You adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that the friend of the world is an enemy of God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture says vainly, “The spirit that has settled in you is oriented toward envious jealousy.” ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

James 4:4-6 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. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

Let's start by going back to verses 1-3. Here James is dealing with these Jewish believers early in church history who have been persecuted and now live out in the Gentile world and Satan is working overtime trying to stop the divine program for the church revealed in Acts 1:8. That program reveals that the church will begin in Jerusalem and spread out to the uttermost parts of the earth. So, he's trying to thwart that program, he's trying to contain the church and one tactic he's using is turning them against one another. He's using the Gentile world and their sin nature to cause division and every evil

thing and James asks, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?” In other words, where is all this fighting coming from? And he answers “Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?” Is it not the desires of your flesh, the sin nature? Is it not sin that dwells in me? Is it not the law of sin in my members? See, there is a war being waged within us; two soldiers at battle. Paul gave us a portrait of this war in Rom 7:21-25. I call it “The War Within”. The sin nature wants to control you and your actions. The sin nature has cravings and until it has satisfied those cravings it relentlessly fights to get them. One of the cravings of the sin nature is power. I call it power lust, the desire to have a position of authority so you can control and manipulate others in pursuit of these relentless cravings of the sin nature. See, people who desire power, even when they get it, want more things and that’s because the sin nature has hundreds of cravings and it uses one means to reach another end. So, in my estimation, Satan is using the Gentile world and their sin nature to stir up strife among them and it’s working pretty well. He’s got them fighting one another, jockeying for the authoritative position in the church of teacher. And James says in v 2, “You lust” better “desire” and do not have;” that is, you desire the position of teacher but you don’t have it, someone else does, “so you commit murder.” And we said that’s not literal murder this is the spirit or attitude of murder, which, in the NT, is hatred (1 John 3:15). When someone has something you want and you can’t get it and you think you should have it you start generating hatred in your spirit. This is one of the sins of the flesh. He goes on to say, “You are envious” that word is used of Joseph’s eleven brothers in the OT; they were envious of him because he was daddy’s favorite and here they are like Joseph’s brothers. They “are envious and cannot obtain; so” they “fight and quarrel.” In other words, their envy does not advance them into the position of spiritual maturity so they can be teacher so the cravings of their sin nature are not being satisfied. They are suffering defeat after defeat because that’s all the sin nature can do. It cannot promote us to godliness, it cannot exalt us properly and God is not going to respond positively to that. God is opposed to that kind of arrogance and we’ll learn more about that in verse 6. James says, here’s the answer to your problem, “You do not have because you do not ask.” This brings us into the ministry of prayer and we highlighted seven points, two of which are here in verses 2 and 3. Let’s review. First, we must *ask*. If you don’t ask don’t expect to receive anything from the Lord, Second, we must *ask with pure motives*. God’s not going to give us things so that we can then isolate them from the plan of God and use them

for our own selfish desires, our little area that's ours, our one thing in life that's all ours and He's out of the equation. Third, we must *ask persistently*. If you don't ask over and over then you really don't want your prayer answered. Fourth, we must *ask in faith*. If you don't believe God can and will answer your prayer then forget it. Fifth, we must *ask genuinely*. None of this half-hearted stuff, none of this liturgical stuff, none of this mantra-like praying, but genuine prayers. Sixth, we must *ask while abiding*. That is, while we abide in Him and He in us, this reciprocal abiding that John is so concerned with in the Upper Room Discourse. This leads to and is connected with the seventh. We must *ask according to His will*. He is not going to answer prayers that are outside of His will for your life and if we're abiding we won't ask for things outside of His will for our life. So, those are seven aspects of prayer, it's not exhaustive. I just wanted to add a few to the two we have here in verses 2-3. Not asking and not asking with pure motives. So, these believers are in a real pickle and James is trying to instruct them out of it. They are operating according to the sin nature, the works of the flesh and James continues with that today in verse 4.

You adulterers, this is bold imagery taken from the OT. It's the language of breaching a marriage contract, engaging in sexual intercourse with someone outside of marriage. Obviously it's figurative here, they are committing spiritual adultery. In the OT Israel was the wife of YHWH by virtue of their covenant relationship so that when she worshipped idols she was committing spiritual adultery (Hos 3:1). Now the church is the bride of Christ and when we operate by the sin nature we are committing spiritual adultery. So, James picks up that figure. Operating by the sin nature is like having sex outside of marriage, it is having an affair with the world, it is that serious. So, after calling them as **adulterers** he asks, **Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?** The word for **know** here is *oida*, it comes from the Classical Greek verb *eidon* from which in Latin is "video". Has it not been laid clearly before your eyes **that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?** Is it not apparent, don't you know this, isn't this well-known that there is no neutrality? You are either a friend of the world which makes you an enemy of God or you are a friend of God which makes you an enemy of the world. There is no third position. You are either walking by the flesh or walking by the Spirit. In all our thinking in all our living, every thought, every act is either pro-God or anti-God. Obviously they are piling up on the anti-God side but there is no neutrality. It is impossible

to be neutral. Neutrality is a myth. People pretend to be neutral but nobody is, yet you find these claims of neutrality everywhere. "We are religiously neutral!" You can read Public School documents (which I have and do) about content and you will always find these statements about we have to remain religiously neutral and yet there is no such thing. I've showed you before that there is no such thing as religious neutrality. The claim to religious neutrality is a myth. Vern Poythress, a Harvard graduate, got his Ph.D in theoretical math, in 1976 he showed in a formal proof that there is no religious neutrality. Essentially, what he showed was that, to claim religious neutrality is to deny God's existence. What this means is that every time you read an article, every time you watch a TV show and someone says "We have to remain religiously neutral on this point" what they are actually saying is, "God does not exist." This is a logical proof in the formal sense and it has gone unanswered. Over 30 years and no one has proved this Harvard graduate wrong. This is how he reasoned. If we assume we are neutral in some subject of study, any subject, pick it, if we can be neutral in that subject then what we are saying is that the subject remains the same whether or not God exists. But if that is true then that subject cannot be the result of God's creation because if it were then He most certainly has said something about it. And if He has created it, as the Bible says He has, then what He has said about it is very important. So, the claim to neutrality is a denial of the existence of the God of the Bible. So, here's what has happened. Satan masquerades as an angel of light and this is the greatest hoax that has ever been perpetrated on the human race. What he does is he's got his position over here, it's obviously anti-God, it's clearly anti-God so what he wants to do is make his position foggy, make it appear not so anti-God. So, he begins to present his position this way, "Now, let's be fair, we don't want to be biased here, we have to be rationale and objective". Now, he's already played you at that point. You have already bought the question because what he has sold you is the concept that this is possible, that we can shed ourselves of all our presuppositions and determine reality. Now, that's a pagan position, that is an anti-God position to be in. So, what he has done is claimed that his position is neutral and not anti-God. He's also implied that the mind contaminated by sin works properly, is objective, is neutral, is rationale, is just looking at the evidence. That is totally contrary to Scripture. The Scriptures state that mind set on the flesh is at enmity with God, it's hostile toward God. That is one of the greatest hoaxes ever perpetrated on the human race and it started right in the garden with Eve. What did he do to

that woman? He got her to think she was in a place of neutrality and she has these two propositions “You will surely die!” and “You will surely not die!” and it’s up to her to decide. And she just followed the logic right down the line and it was a huge mistake. That woman bought into the pretended neutrality myth. Here’s where this insidiously creeps into our thinking and destroys our whole professional lives. We go to school, we learn subjects as if they are neutral, God is not mentioned. We are being trained to think and function in every field in a way that is anti-God. Or, put it James’ terminology, learning subjects as if they are neutral is training you to be an adulterer, secretly, covertly, underneath it all we think and operate no differently in various fields of study than the non-Christian, and we’re told if we don’t operate that way we’re not being objective, we’re not being rational, we’re not being religiously neutral. But all it is is a denial, a constant denial in our everyday life of God’s existence, of His lordship over every field of thought. What we have got to train ourselves to do is study every subject, every field of inquiry in light of God’s word because He created it all and He is therefore central to it all. We’re not going to put aside our religious beliefs. If I put aside my religious beliefs then I can’t be objective because God is the source of objectivity, not me, not you, not human thought. Human thought is contaminated by sin. So, I’ve got to have the word of God as central. So, subtly, Satan has got us to buy into the religious neutrality myth so that, although we are Christians, we function like non-Christians and that makes us impotent. What we are called to do is develop a distinctly Christian philosophy of politics, math, government, education, art, music, everything. Hardly anybody is doing this. Hardly anybody is expending the energy or providing the resources to do this. It takes time and it takes money and it takes mental concentration and total devotion to the Lordship of Christ. So, neutrality is a myth! The most we can hope for is a dialogue of two conflicting viewpoints, and that’s exactly what James says, **friendship with the world is hostility toward God**. There’s no “in-between” position. It’s one or the other. So, don’t fall for this myth of neutrality. No one is neutral. Everyone is either for God or against God. The battle lines have been drawn. God drew them. There are no gray areas.

In James these men have “an affection” for worldly power, that’s what it means when it says **friendship with the world**, they have set their affections on the world, they are “fond” of the world, there’s an “attachment” there. And this is an attachment to the **world** system, the **world** system that

is controlled by Satan. Friend, are you still attached to the world system? Are you still enamored with what the world has to offer? Are you into the wisdom of the world? Are you into the reasoning of the world? Are you into the materialism of the world? Are you into the governments of the world? Are you into the hedonism of the world? Because if you are you don't love God; you hate God and you love Satan. Because he is the god of this world, he is the ruler of this world and there is no neutrality. James already told us that "true religion "is to remain unstained by the world" (1:27) not be affectionate toward it. We have been called out of the world system and although we remain *in* the world we are not to be *of* the world. Friendship with the world James says **is hostility toward God**. The word **hostility** is *echthra* and means "at enmity". Paul says, "the mind set on the flesh is enmity with God" (Rom 8:7 and he lists it as a deed of the flesh in Gal 5:20.

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. "Does this leave any room for neutrality?" He adds two things here. First, the word **wishes**, *boulomai*, which means "you desire to have something" with the implication that you plan accordingly as in Acts 25:22. Believers who want to be a friend of the world and plan accordingly **make** themselves **an enemy of God**. In a few weeks we'll see some of these friends of the world planning their future independent of God down in James 4:13, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'" That's what James has in mind, this desire for the world that results in setting up your life-plans accordingly without respect to God. Second he adds the word **makes himself**, *kathistemi*, it's a middle voice. By his act of wishing he in turn commits an act of treason. He makes himself an enemy. He gets on the other side of the battle line and joins the ranks of Satan to fight against God. He does not move into "no man's land", somewhere between the two armies, he moves to the other side and takes up a fighting position. This is sobering and it recalls Jesus' dialogue with Peter when Peter called Jesus aside and rebuked Him and what did Jesus say? "Get behind Me Satan for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's" (Matt 16:23). Peter had joined the ranks of Satan and taken up arms against the true God, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20). There is no other orientation, there is no neutrality.

Verse 5, here's a verse we have to work with. **Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose.** No problems there. All he's asking them to do is draw the logical conclusion about the world system from the OT. They should know this from the OT Scriptures and so he asks, "do you think God wasted words?" "Do you think there are parts of the Bible that are unimportant and could have been left out?" And then he quotes something. But let me point out a few things. If you notice in verse 5 you have a quote from Scripture and in verse 6 you have another quote from Scripture but there's a difference. In verse 6 the quote is set off in all caps and you'll see in your margin that's a quote from Prov 3:34 (LXX), but in verse 5 it's not in all caps and the reason is because nobody knows where James is quoting from. Search the whole OT and you won't find any verse like that, so, that might alert you that we may have a problem. And there are several problems actually, both theological and grammatical. We will have to straighten these out by making changes in the translation. If you have the wrong translation then what happens to your interpretation? And if you get the wrong interpretation what happens to the application? You get the wrong application. So, let's look at it. The NASB translates, **He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.** Clear enough what it means: God jealously desires the Holy Spirit which He has made to dwell in us. But this creates a theological problem. First, what Scriptures must James be referring to? Remember, this is the first book in the NT (~40-44AD). And the word **Scripture** is *graphe*, meaning "writings". So, what "writings" must James be speaking about? There are no NT writings, it can only refer to the OT. Second, was this taught in the OT? Was it taught anywhere that God made the Holy Spirit dwell in people? No. The Spirit was *with* them but He was not *in* them. Turn to John 14:16-17. Here's Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse. These are His closing words to His disciples just before He went to the cross the next day and He was leaving them so He leaves them with these comforting words. So, his disciples are saying, "Hey Jesus, if you're leaving then we're going to be alone" and Jesus says, no, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides" where? "with you and will be" where? "in you." Note the difference there in those prepositions. He's with you now but He will be in you in the future. And that future indwelling of the Holy Spirit started on the Day of Pentecost but this was unknown in the OT. No passages about God making the Holy Spirit indwell people in the OT. So,

it's impossible to translate this quotation this way. So, the NASB creates a huge theological problem. So, that means something must be wrong here with the way this is translated. So, first, we want to ask, what is the subject? The subject. NASB has "He", "He jealously desires..." and obviously that's God. That word "He" is not in the Greek. It's implied from the verb "desires" and that's not always wrong, often the subject is embedded in the verb. But the interpretation would be that God is jealously desiring the Holy Spirit that indwells believers. And a) that's not taught in the OT and b) it implies that our sin can cause a separation between God the Father and God the Spirit. And that's not true. We can separate ourselves from God by sin but God the Father and God the Spirit can never be separated. They enjoy eternal fellowship. So, while it is grammatically possible to have the subject as "He" it is not theologically possible. So, what is the subject? Notice the words "the spirit", *to pneuma* and for a minute, forget it's capitalized (Greek doesn't capitalize). In the Greek this feminine noun in the accusative is identical to its nominative form. In other words, the form of the word can function as either the subject or the direct object. So, the NASB translators made a choice here to make it the direct object but the KJV translators made the choice to make it the subject ("The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.")ⁱ And, of course, it changes everything. NASB is a positive statement about the Holy Spirit whereas KJV is a negative statement a spiritual attitude of the sin nature. Who's right? There are several clues. The big clue is the first word in verse 6, "But", it's the Greek conjunction *de* and it's a contrastive conjunction. In other words, here's the contrast. Up till v 6 you don't have a contrast but in v 6 James shifts to give the other side. So, that means v 5 is still talking about the sin nature and v 6 gives the contrast, what God does. The second hint is this word "jealously" *phthanos*, it's used 9 times in the NT and every usage is negative. Not once is it ever used as a positive virtue (Matt 27:18; Mk 15:10; Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 3:3; Js 4:5; 1 Pt 2:1). So, again, it indicates we're talking about the sin nature. So, what is the subject? What can we conclude? That "The spirit..." is the subject. So, what do the words "the spirit" refer to. This word is used eight different ways in the Greek lexicon (BDAG). It can be "wind", "breath", the Holy "Spirit", the human "spirit", an evil "spirit", an "emotion", a "mental attitude/disposition". So, what is it here? It's a mental attitude/disposition, a mindset. Turn to 1 Cor 4:21 (also cf 1 Pt 3:4). Here Paul is getting on to the Christians at Corinth and admonishing them to imitate him and he's saying, "Hey, look guys, I'm coming to visit you soon and how do you want me to

come? “What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?” See the word “spirit”, “spirit of gentleness”, it’s a disposition, a mental attitude, Paul’s saying, “Do you want me to come with a gentle disposition, a gentle mental attitude or a rod? That’s how James is using the word “spirit”. Now, let me give you the proper translation, **The spirit that has settled in us envies toward jealousy**. In other words, the mental attitude that has settled in you is oriented toward envious jealousy. What’s the spirit? What’s the mental attitude? We get it from v 4. It’s the spirit of the world! It’s the mental attitude of a believer who has befriended the world. He loves HVP, HVP, HVP. His mind is full of HVP, he loves it, he loves HVP so he fills his mind with it and James is saying, “Hey buddy, the spirit of the world has settled in you and it’s oriented toward envious jealousy”. See, the world system is set up in such a way that it’s all about me. Me, me, me, me, me, selfish, selfish, selfish. I envy others and I cannot obtain so I fight and quarrel. This is all just manifestation of the disaster of the world system and the sin nature that lusts according to that system. This is setting us up for the contrast in v 6, “But He [i.e. God] gives a greater grace”. The spirit of the world envies toward jealousy but God is oriented toward grace. Two opposites. But before we go on let’s look closely at the way I’ve translated this. I want you to write this in your Bible because there is a lot of good application here and you lose that if you get the wrong translation.

The spirit that has settled in you is oriented toward envious jealousy. Note the word **settled**, *katoikizo*, an aorist active indicative. It’s the word for “take up residence” “to settle down”. He’s saying “at some point in the past the spirit of the world took up residence in you, it began to dominate your mentality” and it is **envious toward jealousy**. That’s *pros* with the accusative which means “movement or orientation toward something”. In other words, the spirit of the world is oriented toward, it is disposed toward, it leads to **jealousy**. As I said before that’s not a good thing. In other words, when we get our mind set on the world, when the world has taken hold of us it leads to **jealousy**. We start wanting things that others have. We start wanting positions of authority so we can fulfill the power lust of our flesh. We start wanting other people’s things so we can fulfill the material lust of our flesh. We start wanting all these things and those desires lead to **jealousy**. This is why we have got to get our minds focused on the Scriptures. This is why Paul said, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good

repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” This is why you have got to put the word of God first in your life. This is why, whenever you study anything you have got to study it next to the Bible because 99.9% of everything out there is oriented against God, it is hostile to God and we are called to take every thought captive, not just religious thoughts, but math thoughts, history thoughts, art thoughts, music thoughts, the whole 9 yards. Every day you have got to keep focused on the Scriptures because ultimately, He is the God with whom we have to do. So, you’ve got to set your mind on the word of God, the word of God, the word of God and not on the flesh, not on the things of this world and yourself because the mind set on those things is hostile toward God. Lets’ pray. COMMUNION.

ⁱ Every commentary admits this is some of the most difficult Greek in James’ letter. Several give options but some no decisive commentary (e.g. Bible Knowledge Commentary). Older commentators commented similarly to me since they were working with the KJV, (e.g. *Thru the Bible* with J. Vernon McGee). Wiersbe in the *Bible Believer’s Commentary* mentions the option chosen herein. John MacArthur in *The MacArthur Study Bible* takes the passage as referring to the human spirit envying and so applies it only to the unregenerate. John Gill is the same as MacArthur and mentions other options. There is no scholarly consensus.

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