

INTRODUCTION

Please take God's Word and turn with me to James chapter 4.

We are looking again this morning at James chapter 4.

In our last study we focused on verses 1-3.

Today we're looking at verses 4-6.

James begins in verse 1 by saying, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 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. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 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. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

We have been in a study on the subject of “worldliness.”

And in this study we have looked at various areas in which we are tempted to be worldly.

We have addressed media and music and now we’re considering pleasure.

James chapter 4 specifically reveals that the wrong kind of pleasure reveals the wrong kind of relationship with God.

He also reveals this to be at the heart of the problems they were experiencing as a church.

He says in verse 1 that they were plagued with “quarrels and conflicts.”

These “quarrels and conflicts” were identified as “violent verbal disputes” (Douglas Moo, James, 138).

The word “quarrels” referred to “conflict in general” (The MacArthur Study Bible), while “conflicts” referred to a “specific fight or battle” (MacArthur).

Their battles with one another were because of the conflict they were having within themselves.

He names three problems in verses 1b-3 that identify the internal conflict that is expressed by “quarrels and conflicts.”

First, their conflict was caused by uncontrolled desire.

Their desire for “pleasure” was manifested by how they lived.

They didn’t live for Christ but for self.

They were not denying themselves daily as Luke 9:23 says.

No! They lived solely for the “gratification of sensual, natural, and fleshy desires.”

They wanted to fulfill “every passion and whim that [promised] sensual satisfaction and enjoyment” (John MacArthur, James, 187).

James identifies this as a “war in [their] members.”

The problem was not their environment, it was “their own self-seeking attitude” (Hiebert).

This led to the second cause of their strife—
unfulfilled desire.

“When desires for the wrong kinds of pleasure
are frustrated and unfulfilled, they also wage
external war” (MacArthur).

James identifies this by three phrases.

He says, “You lust and do not have,” “you
commit murder,” and “you are envious and
cannot obtain.”

All three phrases reveal their unfulfilled desire.

The first phrase, “you lust and do not have”
identifies a strong desire that is not fulfilled.

The Greek James uses for “lust” is *epithumeo*
and in this context it refers to a “desire or
longing of any kind.”

Their desire was “inordinate, misdirected, and sinful.”

And because it was unfulfilled it led to murder.

The verb murder (phoneuo) could “include murderous hatred, extremely destructive behavior, and even suicide” (MacArthur).

In either way it identified the unfulfilled chaos that marked their lives.

So their “murdering, fighting, and quarreling [were] the results of unsatisfied lust and envy—results of thwarted desires” (Vernon Doersken, James, 95).

John MacArthur says, “When the lusting person cannot achieve his desired goals—whether for reputation, prestige, sexual gratification, money, power, escape through drugs or alcohol, success, possessions, the affections of another person, or whatever—the result is often catastrophic to

others and always destructive of oneself” (James, 189).

The third phrase, “you are envious and cannot obtain” identified an even stronger desire that was unfulfilled.

The word “envious” (zeloo) was a synonym of epithumeo.

This was a “hot or intense feeling” (Hiebert) which literally meant “to be earnest, to set one’s heart on, to be completely intent upon” (Louw-Nida).

Just as with the other two phrases, this internal drive was unfulfilled, no matter how strong it was.

This revealed their selfish desire in verses 2b-3.

Leading up to this point about selfishness, James first says that worldly unbelievers “do not have because [they] do not ask.”

This does not mean they were prayerless.

It points out that they apparently “felt it inappropriate to ask God for the things they had their heart set on. They devised their carefully laid plans to attain their desires, but their ruthless effects to achieve them in regard of the rights of others resulted in failure and frustration” (D. Edmond Hiebert, James, 247).

James used the present tense verb aiteo (ask) to point out their repeated failure to ask of God.

When they did get around to asking, James says in verse 3 they did not “receive, because [they asked] with wrong motives, so that [they] may spend it on [their] pleasures.”

John Calvin said, “Though they sought, yet they were deservedly denied; because they wished to make God the minister of their own lusts. For they set no bounds to their wishes, as He had commanded; but gave unbridled license to themselves, so as to ask those things of which man, conscious of what is right, ought especially to be ashamed. Pliny somewhere ridicules this impudence, that men so wickedly abuse the ears of God” (Calvin’s Commentaries: James).

Their asking “with wrong motives” meant they were asking “in an evil manner, badly” (Hiebert) so that “they may spend it” or “completely use up or squander it” on their “pleasures” (hedone).

Now in verses 4-5 he moves from their conflict with others , and conflict with self, to their conflict with God.

Notice what James says in verses 4-5:

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. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

In these two verses, James marks out three characteristics of those who are in conflict with God.

The first characteristic is...

Hostility Toward God (v.4)

Their hostility is examined by their address as “adulteresses”

The KJV reads “Adulterers and adulteresses.”

The NASB reads “You adulteresses” and provides the correct reading.

The noun “adulteresses” (moichaklides) appears here in the feminine form and is “found alone despite attempts to include the masculine” (Word Biblical Commentary: James).

D. Edmond Hiebert says, “The reading of the Textus Receptus, ‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses,’ is best understood as being a well-intentioned scribal addition because the term was understood literally; puzzled that only the women should be rebuked as guilty, a reference to the men was added. The shorter reading is well supported by the textual witnesses, and all modern editors of the Greek text agree with accepting it as the original” (James, 249).

James is not intending to be taken literally as referring to physical adultery but metaphorically referring to spiritual adultery.

“The whole concept is based on the common Old Testament idea of Yahweh as the husband of Israel and Israel as the bride of God” (Barclay).

In Isaiah 54:5 it says, “For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name.”

Jeremiah 3:20 says of Israel that “Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,’ says the Lord.”

So just as “Adultery is the sin of violating a marriage covenant by having sexual intimacy with someone other than a spouse,” James is using this term “in a way that his Jewish readers would clearly understand, referring to men as well as women.

He is not talking about sexual but spiritual infidelity, as the term is often used in the Old Testament of God’s unfaithful people, Israel.

It is interesting to note that “Scripture nowhere uses the terms adulterer or adulteress figuratively of Gentiles, because only Israel had a covenant relationship with God to be unfaithful to, just as husbands and wives have the covenant relationship of marriage. Gentiles could be spiritual fornicators, as it were, but not adulterers—a contemptible distinction reserved for Israel, the unfaithful wife” (John MacArthur, James, 191-2).

Notice how...

Their hostility is examined by their friendship with the world

Their friendship with the world “points out the true nature of their pleasure-seeking activity” (Hiebert).

“‘Friendship’ translates the noun *philia*, which is used only here in the New Testament. Its verb form, *phileo*, is often rendered “love” (e.g.,

Matt. 6:5; 10:37; 1 Cor. 16:22) and is even used of the Father's love for the Son (John 5:20) and of the Father's and the Son's love for those who have saving faith (John 11:3; 16:27; Rev. 3:19).

Though they are often used as synonyms in the New Testament, the more common and stronger verb for love (agapao) seems to be more volitional, whereas phileo is more emotional” (MacArthur).

“In James 4:4, philia involves the adopting of the interests of the world to be one’s own” (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament).

James uses philia to describe intense and deep affection for the evil world system” (MacArthur).

“Of the world” is an “objective genitive” which marks “the world as the object of their affection.

D. Edmond Hiebert says the world's "central aim is self-enjoyment and self-aggrandizement in disregard of or in open hostility toward God. To cultivate the world's friendship implies conformity to its principles and aims. To be controlled by the spirit of worldliness is wholly incompatible with loyalty to God; it makes them guilty of spiritual adultery" (James, 251).

We have already noted that John addresses this same issue in 1 John 2:15-17 where some were guilty of loving the world

2 Timothy 3:4 says this attitude will be a dominant theme in the "last days" where "men will be...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Jesus rebukes this dividedness in Matthew 6:24 when He 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 has already rebuked this “double-mindedness” in 1:8 and will again in 4:8

Since he uses this term in 4:8 it defines for us who is double-minded—unbelievers.

Their friendship with the world produces hostility with God

“Hostility” (echthra), “denotes an attitude of personal hostility” (Hiebert).

It is translated “enemy” in Luke 23:12.

Paul includes this word in his list of the works of the flesh (Gal.5:20).

To be an “enemy” is to describe a believer’s life before Christ

Romans 5:10 says, “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.”

Jesus’ work on the cross put to death the “hostility” between the repentant sinner and God

Ephesians 2:14-16 - “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”

Paul makes it very clear in Romans 8:6-9 who is an enemy and who is not

He says, “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7

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; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

John MacArthur says that “those who truly love Him [Jesus] will not love the world or be loved by the world, since the world is the hostile enemy of God.”

Jesus made a distinction between the believer and the world when He said to His disciples in John 15:18-19, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

The Bible has much to say about the enemy of God

Psalm 68:21 says, “Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds.”

Isaiah 42:13 says, “The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.”

Nahum 1:2 says, “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.”

Luke says in Acts 13:6-11 when Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark “had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul,

Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, 10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand."

The term "world" (kosmos), refers to the evil system of the world of which Satan is head.

James says, "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

“Wishes to be” is the Greek word *boulomai*.

This word connotes more than just wanting a desire or wish to be fulfilled. It carries the stronger idea of choosing one thing over another. Here in this context, they are choosing their pleasures over God. They are spiritual harlots.

The phrase “makes himself” (*kathistemi*) means to appoint, make, or ordain. This indicates a conscious intent.

D. Edmond Hiebert says the phrase “asserts that by his decision to foster friendship with the world, the individual ‘constitutes himself,’ or takes his stand as, God’s enemy. The present tense points to the continuing condition, while the middle voice marks it as a self-chosen position” (James, 252).

John MacArthur adds, “A person who wishes to be a friend of the world system has chosen to

make himself an enemy of God. In his heart, his desires for the world supersede any supposed positive ideas he may have about God. He does not have a neutral relationship with God, as an impartial bystander or a distant admirer, but is in the fullest sense His enemy. And to be God's enemy is to remain in spiritual darkness, daily grow more fit for eternal death, and have the sovereign King of the universe as your foe" (James, 194).

An "enemy of God" is defining what "friendship with the world" means. If you're an "enemy of God," you're lost.

Going back to Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and mammon."

The second characteristic of those who are in conflict with God is their:

Disregard for Scripture (v.5)

“James turns to the Scripture to prove his point.

He lets God speak to establish the truth of the matter.

The difficulty, however, is that of the two references James quotes, we are able to identify only the second one (Prov. 3:34).” (Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953-2001). Vol. 14: New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John).

The first is “cited as a quotation from Scripture, but there is no part of Scripture of which it is, in fact, anything like a recognizable quotation.

We may either assume that James is quoting from some book now lost which he regarded as Scripture; or, that he is summing up in one sentence what is the eternal sense of the Old Testament and not meaning to quote any particular passage” (The letters of James and Peter. 2000, c1976 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the

University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed.).

Though one may agree with the rendering in the NKJV over the NASB because in the NASB the term “He” in “He jealously desires” is “not in the Greek text but is supplied by the translators” (MacArthur).

Also, the capitalization of “Spirit” is “arbitrary, since the original Greek manuscripts did not capitalize words.

What we know of this verse is the words “in vain” are in the emphatic position “stressing that this is the point of concern” (Hiebert) so that the verse reads back, “In vain, does the Scripture speak?”

In other words, “Is the message, which Scripture declares ‘in vain,’ spoken in a hallow way to no purpose, so that it has no authoritative claim on

our conduct?” (D. Edmond Hiebert, James, 252).

Now whether the next phrase is what James is referring to as what “the Scripture says” is unknown.

William MacDonald says the “solution of the problem is given by the 'RV'. There the verse is broken into two questions: ‘Or think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary).

Again, no one really knows what the quotation means or whether the word spirit should be capitalized or not.

John MacArthur favors the King James rendering: “The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.” He says, “If this is the correct rendering then James would be saying, in effect,

“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?”—This interpretation is clearly consistent with James’s emphasis in the larger passage. It is also consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament.

In whatever way the verse is interpreted, however, James seems to be saying that unbelievers, who are in a permanent state of spiritual conflict with God, not only are His enemies but also reflect that hostility by not trusting or obeying His Word.

They refuse to acknowledge their natural enmity with and separation from the sovereign God.

Again, regardless of what such a person may claim, it is impossible to hold Scripture in genuine high regard as God’s own Word and yet not trust in Jesus Christ for salvation” (James, 198-99).

The third characteristic of conflict with God is found in the second Scripture quotation James gives in verse 6 and that is:

Pride (v.6)

“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

Here James clearly quotes from the Old Testament, specifically Proverbs 3:34 from the LXX, as does Peter in 1 Peter 5:5.

From this verse, James is saying, “If a person is consumed with worldly lusts, desires, ambitions, pride, and love, he has no claim on this greater grace ” (MacArthur).

God resists the proud

“Proud” Gr.huperephanos, is a compound word composed of huper (above) and phainomai (to appear, or be manifest).

The idea is that of disdainfully and arrogantly supposing on self to be above others.

The term is rendered ‘arrogant’ in Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2, and in both places is directly associated with boasting.

William Barclay says the word literally means, “one who shows himself above other people. Even the Greeks hated pride. Theophrastus described it as ‘a certain contempt for all other people.’ Theophylact, the Christian writer, called it, ‘the citadel and summit of all evils.’ Its real terror is that it is a thing of the heart. It means haughtiness; but the man who suffers from it might well appear to be walking in downcast humility, while all the time there is in his heart a vast contempt for all his fellow-men. It shuts itself off from God for three reasons. (i)

It does not know its own need. It so admires itself that it recognizes no need to be supplied. (ii) It cherishes its own independence. It will be beholden to no man and not even to God. (iii) It does not recognize its own sin. It is occupied with thinking of its own goodness and never realizes that it has any sin from which it needs to be saved. A pride like that cannot receive help, because it does not know that it needs help, and, therefore, it cannot ask” (The letters of James and Peter. W. Barclay, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. 105).

Stuart Scott says, “Pride is the mindset of self (a master’s mindset rather than that of a servant): a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self” (The Exemplary Husband, 179).

Proverbs 21:24 says, “‘Proud,’ ‘Haughty,’ ‘Scoffer,’ are his names, who acts with insolent pride.”

Proverbs 29:23 says, “A man's pride will bring him low,” Why? Because Prov.16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

Proverbs 6:16-17 numbers pride in the list of the seven things that are an abomination to God. Verse 17 says, “Haughty eyes.”

For a believer that fears the Lord, he hates “pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverted mouth” as Prov.8:13 says.

Pride withholds “grace” and it is the enemy of humility

Proverbs 16:5 says, “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”

God gives grace to the humble

Isaiah 66:2 says, “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

Matthew 5:3 says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Luke 18:9-14 says, “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. “The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be

humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

“Just as pride is the root of all sin, so humility is the root of all righteousness.

It is only when the things of the world are no longer admired and sought, when self-concern is replaced with concern for God’s glory, that God’s Spirit can work His sovereign and gracious will in a heart, changing it from being an enemy to being a friend” (John MacArthur, James, 200).

CONCLUSION

Is your life characterized by conflict—conflict with others, conflict with self, and conflict with God?

If so, realize you are living only for yourself and you are a friend of the world who is an enemy

of God and God resists you in your arrogant pride.

God calls you to repent and humble yourself by submitting to Him.

A true Christian is not “part of the evil world system...To be a friend of the world while claiming to be a Christian is the height of self-deceiving folly” (MacArthur).

And the only remedy is to repent.

What a true picture of the worldly person.

Let's pray.