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**Sermons in this series**  
([click to see details](#)):

- Part: 29 [Flee the Lusts of the Flesh-Remember Samson](#)
- Part: 28 [Flee the Lusts of the Flesh-Don't Befriend the World](#)
- Part: 27 [Learning to Flee the Lust of the Eyes](#)
- Part: 26 [Flee the Lust of the Eyes - Remember Lot](#)
- Part: 25 [Bring My Soul Out of Prison](#)
- Part: 24 [Life in the Minor Key](#)
- Part: 23 [Living and Working with a Tough Crowd](#)
- Part: 22 [The Consequence Engine](#)
- Part: 21 [Graduating from the Cave of Troubles](#)
- Part: 20 [Cave of Troubles](#)
- Part: 19 [David's Life of Finding Refuge](#)
- Part: 18 [Praying from the Pits](#)
- Part: 17 [Rejoicing in the Pits](#)
- Part: 16 [Escaping The Pits](#)
- Part: 15 [Finding Christ in the Pits](#)
- Part: 14 [Pathway to the Pits](#)
- Part: 13 [Just As I Am](#)
- Part: 12 [A Refuge for the Abandoned](#)

## Flee the Lusts of the Flesh-Don't Befriend the World



**Part 28** (051120AM)

[Return to previous Page](#) | [Print](#)

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Our God is jealous this morning. He loved us, bought us, found us, drew us, cleaned us and now lives within us by His Holy Spirit. Have you thought deeply about what it means to have a Jealous God living in you? Have you thought about what would offend someone who loved us so much that He wants us to be utterly loyal to Him?

So what could be the worst place we could find ourselves as believers this morning?

The answer comes in James, the very first New Testament letter written to Christ's Church—it is **getting drawn away from our loyalty to our God, acting like the world by cultivating its desires, and becoming God's enemy.**

How can a believer do such a thing? We become an enemy of God when we become friendly with the world.

Listen as James, our Lord's earthly brother, writes to believers and warns them of this dreadful condition he calls 'friendship with the world'. Open there with me to James 4.

- **James 4:1-8** *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. NKJV*

Look closely at verse 4. The word **friendship** only appears here in the New Testament. It is a Greek word that describes love in the sense of a strong emotional attachment.

So think about the implications of this verse with me. God says beware of 'friendship' with the world. What is that?

The word **friend** is a word that means in our English language—1: one **attached to another by affection** or esteem 2: one that is **not hostile toward us**, nor us toward them 3: a **favored companion** 4: one to whom we are **showing kindly interest and goodwill.**

So God says beware of friendship with the world. Using this definition of friendship examine what James has warned us about.

Are you attached to anything that God hates? Do you have affection for something that is utterly opposed to Him? Is the world of the Devil and all of its rebellion and lusts that is hostile towards God—looked upon affectionately by us?

Are God's enemies our favored companions? Do we show interest and good will towards what God hates?

**We become friendly with the world *gradually.***

Part: 11	A Refuge for the Overwhelmed
Part: 10	A Refuge for the Unexpected Changes of Life
Part: 9	Refuge for the Loneliness of Life—Job Loss
Part: 8	Refuge for the Loneliness of Life—Family Conflict
Part: 7	Refuge for the Loneliness of Youth
Part: 6	Christ: Refuge for the Weary
Part: 5	Christ: Refuge for the Unclean
Part: 4	Christ: Our Life-Long Refuge
Part: 3	The Safest Place on Earth
Part: 2	Christ: Our City of Refuge
Part: 1	Anchored to Christ

Look at this progression that James points out—believers who are not careful: 1. allow themselves to be drawn into “the friendship of the world” (James 4:4), 2. which leads to getting “spotted” by the world (James 1:27) as they allow areas of their lives to pattern the current desires of the world. 3. This friendship leads to loving the world (1 John 2:15-17), and this 4. leads to increased conformity to the world (Rom. 12:2). And what is the tragic result? Believers like Lot last week and Samson this week get condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32) through severe chastening sometimes leading to even death but their souls saved “yet as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

And what is friendship with the world again? Remember last week we saw that the Apostle John in 1 John 2:15-17 explains the world we are not to befriend or love is all the lusts and evil desires packaged in varied shapes, sizes, and colors...that always fall into one of three categories:

- **“Lust of flesh” We are tempted by our flesh to chase pleasures, this equals the cravings of the body.** *These are all of the sensual temptations.* This is lust for another person. The desire to have and enjoy the body of an individual, either mentally or physically, even though such pleasure is illegal and/or immoral. We can feed these lusts by going to places where we see uncovered bodies, or watching TV and movies that have various states of immodesty, or by seeking out images in magazines and online that feed these evil desires.
- **“Lust of the eyes” We are tempted by our eyes to chase stuff, this equals the lusting of the eyes.** *These are all of the material temptations.* This is lust for things. The things may be as large as a house or as small as a ring, as bright and dazzling as a new sports car or as dull and dusty as a two-hundred-year-old antique dresser. Lest we think that this is not as bad as the lusts of the flesh, remember that covetousness (insatiable longing for more things) is as damnable as idol worship. That means that the lust for possessions is as wicked as the lust for immorality. Beware of both, they are deadly!
- **“Pride of life” We are tempted by pride to chase status, this equals the boasting of the mouth.** *These are all of the personal temptation.* This is selfishness because I’m most important. This is irritableness because life revolves around me. This is untruthfulness because I need to protect myself. This is laziness because I want to rest and comfort myself. All of these are pride as well as obvious lust for status and special recognition. Pride also shows up as lust for the status of fame, fortune, power, or authority. Pride may also be wanting a title that makes heads turn, like “top executive” or “president” or “executive director” or even “doctor”. In the Scriptures this was Satan’s sin. Pride in all its forms is heinous to God.

Any form of lust God hates. And so any form of lust we must flee and also hate. But look again at James 4.4. What happens when we are friendly to the world? God regards these pleasure-dominated believers adversarially, as verse 4 makes so clear with the reference to unfaithfulness, calling it spiritual adultery:

**“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”**

In the Old Testament, Israel was often called an adulteress for claiming to serve God while pursuing idols (e.g., Hos 1-3). So James says that believers **who claimed to be God’s friends but were really sharing the world’s values** (3:13-18)—were really unfaithful to God—and become God’s enemies.

This is the most sobering thought of this entire passage. James has stated that a believer—one who has trusted in Christ alone for salvation, can become “an enemy of God”—God’s adversary. “This is horrifying! This requires some reverent and careful thought.

James is not saying friendship with people in the world is hatred toward God or makes anyone his adversary. Rather, friendship with the world—the kosmos, the evil world system which lies under the power of Satan—this friendship makes one God’s enemy (cf. John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4; 1 John 5:19).

Believers who choose to pursue the pleasures of the world are ineluctably drawn to friendship with the forces of the world-system, which are at the very least indifferent to God and at the worst openly hostile to him.

These friendships will ultimately spawn in the believer’s heart the same indifferences and hostilities, thereby turning a true Christian into a practical enemy of the God he claims and desires to love.

These are painful thoughts—that a Christian for whom Christ died when he was still an enemy (Romans 5:10) should in effect lower himself to live as a redeemed enemy of God! Yet this is the very focus of our text because James is writing to Christians. And it rings true to our Christian experience.

Many Christians, believers who have not disclaimed God or announced their allegiance to the world, derive their pleasures and entertainments in things which are patently hostile to God.

Their “friends” are the degraded videos and movies and CDs which demean the God they profess to love. There are also many who participate in evanescent pleasures God specifically forbids. Such become practical enemies by choice. “Anyone,” says James, “who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (v. 4b).

It must be said that those who persist in living as friends of the world are very likely without grace, not Christians, despite their claims to faith.

*Paul says of such, “For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things” (Philippians 3:18, 19). They are friends of the world! [1]*

Now look at [James 4:5](#). Did you catch why God hates this world-friendly mode so much? It is because God loves us with a jealous love.

God compares friendship with the world to adultery. God says that we as believers are "married to Christ" ([Rom. 7:4](#)). We ought to be faithful to Christ as our husband.

The picture of "spiritual adultery" is a repeated theme in the warnings of the Old Testament Prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Hosea (see [Jer. 3:1-5](#); [Ezek. 23](#); [Hosea 1-2](#)). God warned Israel that adopting the sinful ways of the other nations, and by worshiping their gods, they committed adultery against God. The world is God's enemy. Those who want to be a friend of the world cannot be the friend of God. Our flesh and its evil desires is also God's enemy. No believer who lives for the flesh can be God's friend.

Understanding that the Holy Spirit's jealousy for us as James states it—

*"opens a heart-changing truth to us: even when we sin by seeking our pleasures in friendship with the world, we are greatly loved, for jealousy is an essential element of true love.*

*We are brides of Christ, and the Holy Spirit does not want us to go somewhere else to "have our needs met." The Holy Spirit's true love for us evokes a proper intolerance of straying affection. The personalness of this ought to steel us against wandering. This jealous Spirit is inside us. When we sin, he is pained!*

*Furthermore, his jealousy is passionate, for the idea in the Greek is that he longs or yearns for us with an intense jealousy. To realize that the awesomely holy God who transcends the universe and is wholly other and self-contained is at the same time personally and passionately and lovingly jealous for our affection—this realization ought to stop any of our "affairs" with the world and cause us to prostrate our souls adoringly before him. How we are loved!"[2]*

And because we are so loved, God wants us to repent of any friendship with the world—so He warns us by showing us what will happen to us if we persist in this friendliness to the world mode.

Now that takes us to Samson. He is the classic picture of one who through the lusts of the flesh became a friend of the world.

Samson is one of the most powerful pictures I've ever seen of the futility and loss that friendship with the world brings. Samson gradually became a friend of the world and reaped in his lifetime the complete loss of everything he had lived his entire life to get.

Samson is a powerful reminder of God's grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time. That's the wonder of God's grace, the God of the second chance.

The life of Samson is recorded in God's Word as a picture of the destructive power of sin, and the restoring power of grace. Samson often lived in the lust of the flesh; Samson often walked by the lust of the eyes; Samson often responded with the pride of life. Yet Samson in the final analysis, as God sees His life – is a man of faith. What a picture of grace. One moment of godly sorrow, leading to a repentant prayer of faith – at his darkest hour, God brought him back to the place of blessing. God is the God of the second chance.

*Marvelous grace of our loving God,*

*grace that exceeds our sin and our shame.*

*Yonder on Calvary's Mount outpoured—*

*There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled...*

I always like to say: If Samson made it – anyone may. He was about as low and as far and defiled as you can get and yet he made it and was one of God's dear heroes of the faith.

The life of Samson is a tragic story of the cost of yielding to the lusts of the flesh- and that's what I want to show you this evening as we start back in the book of Judges 13-16.

But before we go, let me just summarize the dangers of friendship with the world, the consequences of wandering from consecrated living, and the wonders of God's grace! All seen in the incredible life of Samson. If I was to distill his life down I would say this:

Samson is a powerful illustration of friendship with the world through the lusts of the flesh—and those destructive powers that the lusts of the flesh wield.

- Samson illustrates people who have power to conquer others, but who cannot conquer themselves.
- He could set the Philistine fields on fire, but was consumed by the fires of his own lust.
- He could kill an attacking lion, but was utterly defeated by the passions of his own flesh.
- He could easily break the bonds that men put on him, but the shackles of his own sin gradually grew stronger on his soul.
- He could have led the nation, he preferred to work independently, and as a result, left

no permanent victory behind.

- He could have been remembered for what he built up, but instead everyone but God only remembers what he destroyed – lions, foxes, fields, gates, soldiers, women’s purity, and his own life and ministry.

Samson is a powerful reminder of God’s grace. Though he descended into the depths of a lust filled life, wandering far from his calling and consecration – the Lord never let go of him. His soiled life is recorded. His defeats are unvarnished and clear for all to see. But against the backdrop of sin is the beauty of grace. God forgives, God restores, and God uses Samson one final time.

- Sampson pictures the consequences of friendship with the world and the flesh. He is a graphic picture of loss.
- Experiencing great blessing and strength in one area of our lives does not make up for neglect and weakness in another area of our lives. Just because Samson had supernatural strength, had a Nazarite vow and the Spirit of God moved upon him- that was his strength—it didn’t compensate for his overfed lust, anger and pride—he never restrained with repentance. Strength in one area doesn’t compensate for weakness in another area. We must in the strength of the one area stand in the boldness and power of the Lord to put to death those sins of our flesh and to stand in the strength and to mortify the weakness. Samson never realized that.
- Knowing the presence of God does not automatically overwhelm our will. Samson knew God personally but did not choose to obey. We must choose to obey or we will disobey!
- God always uses men and women of faith in spite of their failures! What a lesson, what a blessing.

But what is the answer for all of us today who want to be God’s friends and yet who still struggle with the lusts of this world around us? The answer is in James 4.

“But he gives more grace.” That is the answer—**more grace!**

This is not saving grace, for every believer has that. Rather, it is literally “greater grace”—God’s gracious supply to live as we ought in a fallen world. As Augustine put it, “God gives what he demands.” There is always, for the believer, greater grace. This is without doubt one of the most comforting texts in all of Scripture.

This verse means there will always be enough grace regardless of our situation or need—always. The writer of Hebrews confidently tells us, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” ([Hebrews 4:16](#)).

We have no need which outstrips his grace, and we never will! Even if we fall into abject sin there is a stream of grace, as Paul said: “But where sin increased, grace increased all the more” ([Romans 5:20b](#)). “For daily need there is daily grace; for sudden need, sudden grace; for overwhelming need, overwhelming grace,” says John Blanchard. John Newton, author of “Amazing Grace,” knew this well:

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,*

*I have already come:*

*’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,*

*And grace will lead me home.*

Whatever our condition or situation, he always “gives us more grace.” He gives grace to overcome *personal weaknesses*. **If to your alarm you find that you are repeatedly succumbing to a burning pursuit of pleasure, God will give you more grace if you ask.**

**If you are a victim of an imploding self-centeredness which repeatedly sucks you into its nothingness, and you want deliverance, there is grace for the asking.**

Perhaps you are so stubborn that you have never lost an argument. Perhaps you are such a knothed that you never listen to anyone. Now you find that your most intimate relationships are impaired, so that your spouse and friends find your presence a burden, but you want to change. **God will give you more grace.**

If you have fed on cherished hatreds, but now see that the feast has really been the Devil’s feast and the main course your soul, and you want deliverance, he will give you more grace.

All we need to do is ask for it!

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[1] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: James—Faith That Works*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[2] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: James—Faith That Works*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.