

Warning Against Worldliness

11.1.09

4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet 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 wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves therefore 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. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:1-10 ESV

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" The language here assumes that this is already happening. Conflict in general, specific manifestations.

"Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? The reason why the fighting is happening. Where we get our word hedonism.

P: Misplaced passions always lead to problems.

"You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel" Likely figurative, however it highlights the significance of their conflict and where it could lead. Also shows agreement with Jesus' equation of hatred and murder.

"You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. When there is a need, you fight for it instead of asking God for it. When you do ask for things, you ask out of impure motives to selfishly spend it on yourselves.

P: When we are in need, we should ask God for the things we need – and we need to ask for the right reasons.

What are you asking God for these days? Why are you asking him?

"You adulterous people!" James has had all he can stand. Explosion of righteous anger.

"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" World system.

"Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." OT magery they would have understood.

"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? Serious, significant, OT language his Jewish audience would have understood. God loves His people with a passionate, covenantal furious love and wants them to follow Him undividedly.

P: Friendship with the world is incompatible with friendship with God.

"But he gives more grace." God's unmerited favor toward us purchased for us by the cross of Jesus.

P: God's grace is greater than our greatest sin.

Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

P: Humility is the pathway to grace.

Am I walking in humility before God?

"Submit yourselves therefore to God." Line up under. Picture of soldiers under authority.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Take your stand" against your enemy.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Ref. to OT priests, now through Christ.

"Cleanse your hands, you sinners" OT Priests had to ceremonially wash their hands before approaching God. Clean the *outside*.

"and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Speaks of the heart. Clean the *inside*.

"Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom." Be broken over your sin. Flippant laughter in sinning.

P: Serious sin calls for serious repentance.

All of our sin is serious. All of our repentance should be serious.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." This final command sums up all that James has been saying since v. 7. "Make oneself low."

The Gospel is the only antidote for our sinful condition.

1. The Gospel addresses our misguided passions and calls us to a passion for Jesus.
2. The Gospel addresses the impure motives in our prayers.
3. The Gospel calls us away from friendship with the world and into friendship with God.
4. The Gospel shows us God's grace that is greater than our greatest sin.
5. The Gospel shows us the ultimate example of humility and enables us to walk in humility.
6. The Gospel shows us the seriousness of our sin and our need for serious repentance.
7. In the Gospel, we see that we are more sinful than we could ever imagine, but more loved than we could ever dream.

Works Consulted: Expositor's Commentary, MacArthur Study Bible, ESV Study Bible, MacArthur Commentary on James, The Bible Exposition Commentary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, New Bible Commentary, The Outline Bible, Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary, Wilmington's Bible Handbook, Word Pictures of the New Testament