

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

Lesson: 26

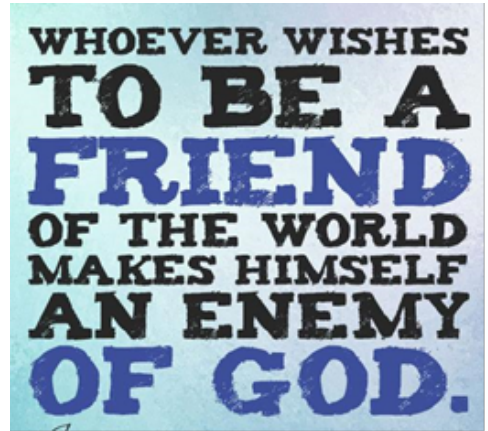
Text: 4:1-10

Date: 9-10-23

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### TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(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.

**(Gen 4:1-16; Ps 18:41; 66:18;**

**Mt 5:21,22; 7:7; Mk 15:10; Ac 5:17,18; Rom 7:23; Titus 3:9;**

**1 Pet 2:11; 1 Jn 3:15-22; 5:14)**

(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."**

**(Gen 2:7; Ex 20:5; Prov 3:34; Is 54:5-8; 57:3; Jer 2:2; 3:20; 31:32; Hos 2:2-5; 3:1; 9:1; Mt 6:24; 23:12; Jn 15:19; Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Gal 5:17; 1 Pet 5:5; 1 Jn 2:15)**

(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**.

**(Ex 30:17-21; Dt 4:7; Job 5:11; Ps 24:3-4; 51:17; 73:28; 119:113,169,170; Is 1:16; 57:14-16;**

**Jer 4:14; Mic 1:8,9; 2:4; Joel 1:5,12; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7;**

**Mt 5:4; Lk 1:52; 6:25; 15:20 18:14; Eph 4:27; 6:11-18; Heb 7:19; 1 Pet 5:6-9)**

James here is similar to Jesus, who charged His enemies with murder and adultery. Adultery is understood as apostasy from the true religion to engage in idolatrous practices, a matter previously discussed. Murder is enlarged by John (1 John 3:15) to include hatred, but is used by Jesus as meaning not just hatred but actual murder (cf. Matt. 23:29-36). The Jews who had become Christians had come from a milieu where persecution of religious enemies to the point of death was acceptable and in a sense required. By the time this epistle was written Jesus, Stephen, James the son of Zebedee, and perhaps others had been put to death by the Jews.

James calls them adulteresses, rendered by the RSV as “unfaithful creatures.” This catches the real problem as one of unbelief. Calling them adulteresses indicated their unfaithfulness in their relationship to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Only an audience with a thoroughly Jewish heritage and acquainted with Jesus’ preaching could appreciate the charge of adultery without further explanation. Just as Israel was joined to God in a bond stronger than marriage, so the church was the bride pledged to Christ the Bridegroom. Jesus taught this in the parables of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14) and the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). James knew the church as Christ’s bride.

The impossibility of friendship with both the world and God seems a reflection of Jesus’ saying in the Sermon on the Mount: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Where James speaks of “friendship,” Jesus speaks of servitude. James substitutes “world” for Jesus’ “mammon.” Whereas the Sermon stresses the compelling servitude in the relationship between the person and the object of his devotion, James puts the emphasis on the willing and, yes even enjoyable, alliance between the sinner and the world.<sup>4</sup> Friendship with the world has turned the recipients of James’ letter into God’s enemies.

us” (4:5). The RSV by putting spirit in lower case understands it as a reference to the noncorporeal part of man, which God desires for Himself. A reference to the Holy Spirit seems preferable not only because it is grammatically adequate but also because it fits the context. The translation would then be: “The Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearns enviously.” One commentator aptly remarks that the Spirit who dwells in Christians “can brook no rival for our affection.”<sup>5</sup> The double-minded person who tries to serve two masters by attempting the impossible feat of being friends with both God and the world puts the Holy Spirit in an intolerable position. The Spirit’s concern for the Christian is nullified by the Christian’s unacceptable commitment to unholy living.

“The Spirit which He made to dwell within us yearns enviously” is not that far from Paul’s understanding of the Spirit’s indwelling, praying, and interceding (Rom. 8:9-11, 26-27). Paul’s “inward groaning” (Rom. 8:23) might be developed from James’ “envious yearning.”

#### LIFE APPLICATION

“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.”  
What are examples of being friends with the world or friends with God?