

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

Lesson: 27

Text: 4:4-10

Date: 9-24-23

Trinity Lutheran Church

Pastor David Nehrenz

www.tlcnorman.org



TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(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)

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.⁴ 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.”⁵ 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.”

Following James' condemnation of his readers is a specific Christology, offering a solution to the dilemma of sin that threatens them with damnation. “Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you (*tapeinōthēte enōpion kuriou, kai hupsōsei humas*)” reflects these words of Jesus: “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:11-12). These words carry with them a specific Christology. Here is a clear case of a general reference most appropriately used of Christ, though later it is applicable to all Christians. As Christ humbled Himself to be exalted by God, so Christians sharing in His humility will also be exalted in Him. The same literary method is used in the Beatitudes and is traceable in James. The same words for “humbled” and “exalted” are used in James and Matthew, and thus a dependence in some sense or a common source for them seems probable. In Matt. 23:11-12 Jesus is referring to Himself, as He is also in Matt. 20:26. He is both servant and slave, and in that capacity He offers up His life in death as the atonement (Matt. 20:26-28). Paul in his great hymn to Christ uses the same terminology in describing Christ's humiliating Himself and His subsequent exaltation by God (Phil. 2:8-10).⁸

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?