

# Warning Against Worldliness – Part 2

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – James instructs his audience to avoid worldly passions while walking in faith
2. aim – to cause us to put aside worldly passions and strive for true humility before God and others
3. passage – James 4:1-12

### b. outline

1. The Cause of Worldliness (James 4:1-3)
2. The Condemnation of Worldliness (James 4:4-6)
3. The Cure for Worldliness (James 4:7-12)

### c. opening

1. the nature of the **second half of the letter**
  - a. **chaps. 1-2** = the great problem – the *definition* of faith (**i.e.** what is genuine saving faith?)
  - b. **chaps. 3-5** = the resulting problems – the *transformation* of faith (**i.e.** what are the works of faith?)
    1. (**now**) the nature of *desire* – the work of faith in which our *desires* in this world are conformed to the will of God in all things – **faith = transformed desires**
    2. **thesis: everyone who claims faith in Christ must be guided by a sense of humility and self-sacrifice, a transformation of our base desires which permeates our conduct**
      - a. **the work of faith in what we desire in this world (like speaking and understanding)**
    3. **problem:** strife and division *in the body of Christ* – **not** caused by external differences (**i.e.** opinions over things *outside of ourselves*), but by sinful passions that are at war with each other
      - a. the **lack of spiritual conflict** within the born-again individual, such that his inward desires are similar to the *unregenerate man*: a constant “pushing” and “pulling” of various desires, all vying for attention and gratification, *but never being controlled in self-sacrifice*
      - b. **IOW:** Christians acting like reprobate men – Christians **abusing their liberty in Christ** to *indulge* in sin, rather than taking that sin “captive” and being transformed in holiness
      - c. **IOW:** Christians imbibing in **worldliness** ...

## II. The Condemnation of Worldliness (James 4:4-6)

### Content

#### a. the accusation (v. 4a)

1. James uses a *single word* which (**IMO**) reveals the accusation that he is making ...
2. *moichalides* (moy-ka-lead-es) = lit. adulteresses
  - a. a noun (a person, place, or thing), plural (more than one), vocative (directly addressing someone; **i.e.** an adjective *about* someone), feminine (specifically of the female gender)
  - b. translated “*you adulterous people*” (ESV, NIV) or “*ye adulterers and adulteresses*” (KJV) as a way of solving the “gender” problem – **i.e.** James is *clearly* not referencing *only* females in the churches
    1. the accusation is being leveled at *everyone* (male or female) that is abusing their liberty, so modern translations “solve” this language problem by using more “gender neutral” adjectives
    2. however, (**IMO**) the *feminine* usage of this word *is* significant – it reveals how James is thinking about the people of the church *in their relationship to Christ*
    3. and ... to understand it, we need to “rewind” our understanding of the term itself ...
3. the centrality of marriage to creation
  - a. marriage is a *fundamental element* of human civilization and human flourishing – it is established at the very beginning of human history to be a means by which humanity fulfills its purpose
  - b. **i.e.** after Adam was formed, God saw that it was not “good” for the man to be “alone” (**Gen. 2:18ff**)
    1. even though man was surrounded by animals, spiritual beings, and (most importantly) God
    2. **i.e.** not “alone” in the physical sense, but in the sense that no other creature was *like him*
    3. after this pronouncement, God brings all the animals before Adam to name – but, the *real reason* for this task was to discover that *no other creature* possessed the *Imago Dei*
      - a. **remember:** Adam’s relationship with animals was one of *perfect harmony* – the fear of man did not fall upon animals until after the Flood (**Gen. 9:2**) – although he could “relate” them as creatures, he could not truly relate them as rational beings

4. therefore, God formed another creature *from the man* (i.e. transferring the *Imago Dei* from him)
  - a. this “woman” would be *very much like him*, yet *distinctly different* (i.e. complementary)
  - b. the similarities between them would allow them to relate together as *common partners*
  - c. the differences between them would allow them to fulfill the Creation Mandate (**Gen. 1:28**)
  - d. marriage (then) is *foundational* to the very existence of humanity and its *purpose under God*
4. the corrupting of marriage within creation
  - a. like all things (including the *Imago Dei*) marriage is corrupted by sin, yet still remains a part of the most fundamental sense of “being human” – it remains a *key element* of human flourishing
  - b. the Ten Commandments (i.e. the Ten Words) are the moral foundation of all human existence
    1. they flow out of the very nature of God himself, thus are *central* to the *Imago Dei within us*
    2. they are specific prohibitions against sin (corruption) that strike at the *heart* of what it means to be made in the image of God, for they *reflect the very nature of God himself*
      - a. e.g. the First Tablet = laws that reflect the fact that man knows there is a Creator
      - b. e.g. honoring parents = because God formed man and woman to make life; no murder = because God is the source of all life; no *adultery* =
        1. because God is faithful to his covenants and always keeps his promises to his people
        2. because marriage is a heterosexual, monogamous, life-long, *covenantal* relationship
        3. an *unfaithfulness to a covenant relationship established from the nature of God himself*
  - c. adultery = **giving to another what is reserved only to one’s spouse** – to be “intimate” with another in what is reserved only for one’s wife or husband
    1. it is an *unfaithfulness* to the “one flesh” union by seeking intimacy “outside” of it alone
    2. it can be either *physical* or *emotional* intimacy given to another – just as Jesus considered “lust” to be a form of adultery (**Matt. 5:28**), so the pursuit of *emotional intimacy* is also adultery
  - d. it is **this definition** that James is using as the accusation against those in the church abusing their liberty – they are committing a form of *spiritual adultery* ...
5. the imagery of marriage in the New Testament
  - a. Jesus *refers* to himself as the “bridegroom” (**Matt. 9:15**), and he uses parables that intimate *himself* as the bridegroom (**Matt. 25:1-12**); the imagery is direct in **Rev. 18:23; 19:7; 22:17**; and Paul uses the imagery to instruct husbands in **Eph. 5:25ff** (“... as Christ loved the church”)
    1. i.e. the *church* is pictured as the bride, with Christ as the bridegroom receiving this bride
  - b. **just as God brought a bride to the first Adam, so the Father brings a bride to the second Adam, his incarnate Son, to be with him forever and to complete his mission**
    1. **picture**: a wedding ceremony, with the nervous groom seeing his beautiful bride as she enters
      - a. more beautiful than any other day of her life, she is escorted to the groom by her father
    2. the Father gives to the Son a beautiful bride, robed in the righteousness *that he himself earned*
      - a. i.e. a “wife” formed out of the very nature of the Son – out of his righteousness, they become “one flesh” – the Church (i.e. all believers, the elect) is *intimately* united to Jesus as his bride
        1. **IMO**: it is no “accident” that Jesus had no earthly wife – he had come to seek the bride his *heavenly* Father had procured for him (did Joseph ever seek a wife for Jesus?)
        2. **IMO**: it is *interesting* that Jesus’ first “sign” in the Fourth Gospel was *at a wedding* ... John calls it a “sign” to “manifest his glory” (or purpose; **John 2:11**)
    - b. therefore, individual Christians, *being a part of the Church*, are a part of Christ as his bride
  - c. it is **this picture** of marriage from the N.T. that James is using as his accusation against those in the church abusing their liberty – they are committing spiritual adultery **against Christ Jesus**
6. the imagery of spiritual adultery against Christ
  - a. **principle: worldliness is a focus on temporal wants; it flows out of a heart strongly attached to this world – it is giving to “another” what is reserved only to Christ Jesus**
    1. **IMO**: this is why James uses the **feminine**: we are the *bride* of Christ – **for us to give our attentions, affections, loyalties, intimacies, love to something/someone other than Jesus is the same as a bride giving her affections to another man**
    2. our “passions” should be only for Christ, our “desires” should be only for him
      - a. i.e. think about how *devastating* it is to learn that a spouse has been unfaithful – now imagine how devastating it is *to Jesus* to see his bride ignore *him* and desire things *in a fallen world* more than they desire him
      - b. e.g. “Christians” who are **more in love with life itself** than with him – terrified and paralyzed by the fear of death (**Hebrews 2:14-15**)

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”