

Christ Reformation Church

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A Faith that Works The Epistle of James

***You see that a person is
justified by works and not by
faith alone. (2:24)***

***“Friendship With the World
Makes God Our Enemy”***

September 27, 2015

Sermon Text: James 4:1-10

Scripture Reading: Deu 7

Introduction-

James 4:1-10 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.

Last time we looked at this portion of James' letter and emphasized that he is

writing to a mixed company of people, all of whom profess to be Christians. He is encouraging genuine believers and he is strongly rebuking counterfeits, calling them to repentance. Look again at what he exposes as happening among them:

- Quarrels and fighting
- Covetous desires which, when denied, produce murder (yes, murder!)
- Distorted forms of prayer motivated by sinful selfish lust
- Friendship with the world
- A “party on” atmosphere

And we said that this kind of scenario is ever so common in today’s local church. James is not afraid to say so, and neither must we be.

I wanted to spend some time this morning in particular looking at these two verses:

(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"?

When the Bible calls people “adulterous,” most often does so in the sense of “idolatrous.” That is what James has in mind here. Idolatry. Friendship with the world is idolatry and these people he is preaching to, these who claim to be Christians, are actually doing what OT Israel did so often – bowing down to the world’s idols. In so doing they were breaking their covenant with the Lord and committing spiritual adultery.

Surely James has the opening commandments in mind here:

Exodus 20:1-6 And God spoke all these words, saying, (2) "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (3) "You shall have no other gods before me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, **for I the LORD your God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (6) but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

We will come back to this matter of the Lord being *a jealous God* in a moment.

Friendship with the world. We either stand with Christ, or we stand with the world. We are either the friend of the world and thus the enemy of Christ, or we stand with Christ and are the enemies of the world. It cannot be had both ways. But these people, whom James once again calls “double-minded” were indeed trying to have it both ways, just as so many people do today who claim to be Christians. They want to stay on friendly terms with the world but they want to go to heaven too. Can't be done.

What is the world?

The world is far more than this round globe of course. The world is *the cosmos*. It is an ordered system – a kingdom if you will – that is absolutely opposed to Christ. Its values, its philosophies, its structure and certainly its leader (Satan, the god of this world), are all darkness opposed to the Light of Christ. There is NO common ground between the two. The kingdom of God. The kingdom of this world. And every human being must choose for one or the other. Most choose the world.

John 15:16-27 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed

you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (17) These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

(18) "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **(19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**

(20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

(22) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. (23) Whoever hates me hates my Father also. (24) If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. (25) But the word that is written in their Law must be

fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' (26) "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (27) And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

It's quite clear, right? Every true Christian is the friend of God and the enemy of the world. The world hates Christ and Christ's people. Which side are you on? Do you have enemies? Who are they? Who hates you? Christ is the great Divider, you see.

And you see then that James is confronting these people who claim to be friends of Christ but who in fact are friends of the world. How? He already alluded to one example:

James 2:1-4 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (2) For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, (3) and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," (4) have you not then made distinctions

among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

They wanted the money and the recognition and the power of the rich to rub off on them. Why? Because this is how the world thinks. And James goes on to expose still another fundamental attitude of the world. Look at 4:1-3 again. They have the "me first" mentality. James tells them:

James 4:6-10 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.

They were full of pride. Self. They exalted themselves. The devil was quite active right in the middle of them, as evidenced by their worldly mindset. At the same time, they were alienated from the Lord, at odds with Him. It was a sorry state of affairs and they should be weeping and mourning over it instead of laughing.

Years ago in the eschatology-craze age, Hal Lindsey wrote that book “The Late Great Planet Earth” and then another “Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth.” James is saying to these people and to us that any so-called “church” that is characterized by a love for the world’s values and which evidences the rotten fruit of the deeds of the flesh – the quarreling, the self-seeking – has Satan alive and well right in the middle of them. That is to say, many local churches are indeed synagogues of Satan, as numbers of the Reformed confessions of faith say. The hearts of the people are “double-mindedness” through and through. They really serve the god of this world and thus are idol temples.

Now, let’s come back to this jealousy subject that James mentions. Here it is again:

(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"?

Verse 5 is a difficult one to translate for a number of technical, grammatical reasons. One problem is that “pneuma”

(spirit) is in a form that can make it the subject OR the object of the sentence. Here the ESV has “spirit” being the object of the Lord’s yearning. But it is also possible to translate this sentence with “spirit” as the subject, as the One doing the action of yearning jealously.”

^{BNT} **James 4:5** ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι
κενῶς ἡ γραφὴ λέγει· πρὸς
φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ **τὸ πνεῦμα** ὃ
κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν,

So it is a hard verse to understand, as you can see in the following translations of it:

^{ESV} **James 4:5** 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"?

^{NAS} **James 4:5** Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

^{KJV} **James 4:5** Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

^{NAU} **James 4:5** Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the

Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

^{NIV} **James 4:5** Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

^{RSV} **James 4:5** Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"?

And on top of all this, James refers to some OT passage that we cannot find! The ESV for example puts that Scripture in quotes, leading us to believe that it must be a specific verse in the OT. But it isn't. You can't find it. So what are we to do? We must interpret this verse according to its context. Greek experts really can't help us that much.

What is the context? It is this:

James is speaking to people who claim to belong to Christ but who are double-minded. They are friends of the world. They are idolatrous (adulterous).

And what have we already seen about what God's reaction to idolatry among His people is? –

Exodus 20:1-5 And God spoke all these words, saying, (2) "I am the

LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (3) "You shall have no other gods before me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, **for I the LORD your God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

God is jealous for His glory. He does not share that glory with anyone.

Exodus 34:12-16 Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. (13) You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (14) (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), (15) lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, (16) and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods

and make your sons whore after their gods.

Deuteronomy 4:23-26 Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. (24) For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (25) "When you father children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger, (26) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed.

This is what James is talking about. The jealousy, the consuming fire jealousy of God against people who claim to be His but who worship idols. Now, lest anyone claim that this is all OT stuff and we need not worry about it today because in Christ there is just grace --

1 Corinthians 10:20-22 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I

do not want you to be participants with demons. (21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (22) Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

James is warning his listeners in the strongest terms of the same thing Moses warned Israel about and the same thing Paul warned the Corinthians about – *idolatry, double-mindedness, friendship with the world while claiming to be His alone – awakens the Dragon*. Only this time, not Satan, but the consuming fire of God Himself. Today there are many, many local churches, pastors, and church members who need to be trembling because their love of the world has provoked the Lord to jealousy.

The church pew is a very dangerous place to be, if you are playing the hypocrite. If you are double-minded. If you are a friend of the world. If we would follow Christ, He requires our full allegiance.

He Gives Grace to the Humble-

James 4:6-10 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.

THERE is the key to real church “growth.”

For His true people, for those who genuinely submit to Him, resist the devil, and humble themselves, the Lord promises to draw near. He promises His grace, not His fire. Consider the instructions here:

- Submit to God
- Resist the devil
- Draw near to God
- Cleanse your hands
- Purify your hearts
- Be wretched, mourn and weep
- Stop partying as if all is well and rather mourn
- Humble yourselves

And what are the promises?

- He will give grace
- The devil will flee
- God will draw near
- He will exalt you