

***“Friendly With the World”***

August 26, 2012

Text: James 4:4-6

**Adultery involves a married person forming a physically intimate relationship w/ someone to whom he/she is not married.**

In Israel, the penalty for adultery was death.

Deut 22:22=> *“If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die.”*

God hates adultery today just as much as He did in OT times.

I Cor 6:9 lists adultery among the sins that will exclude a person from God’s Kingdom, unless he repents of it.

I Tim 3:2 says that an elder must be a one-woman man, meaning he has eyes for no other woman than his own wife, so he doesn’t flirt w/ other women.

**When Israel worshiped idols, God called her an adulteress.**

Ezek 16=> *“You **adulteress wife**, who takes strangers instead of her husband!”* (16:32).

Israel was married to God by the Abrahamic covenant.

But they’d become indifferent to Him, ignored that covenant, & had gone looking for other gods, committing spiritual adultery.

In Hos 1, God told Hosea to marry a prostitute who would not remain faithful to Him, so Israel could see how treacherous/vile their spiritual adultery was, in God’s eyes.

Hosea became an object-lesson for the nation, of their shameful unfaithfulness to the Lord, and of God's faithfulness to His marriage covenant w/ them.

**The first word in the text we will examine today is translated**  
***“You adulteresses!”***

James' original readers were Jewish Xns, well aware of this word's significance, literally a/w/a spiritually/historically. It had to be shocking to hear him address them in this way. He had taken off the gloves, & was no longer pulling his punches, in his letter to them.

**As we've seen in our study of James, he has contrasted true wisdom from heaven, w/ the world's false wisdom.**

This is a contrast between 2 opposite lifestyles—the living out of 2 opposite sets of perspectives/values/morals.

- \* Godly/heavenly wisdom—a lifestyle that is pure, peaceful/gentle, reasonable/merciful, unwavering unhypocritical, & characterized by righteousness. It is living in humble obedience to God's Word out of love for Him & confident trust in His goodness.

- \* Worldly wisdom—an earth-bound, fleshly, & demon-inspired lifestyle, driven by selfish ambition & bitter jealousy. It produces nothing but disorder & every evil thing.

When James began last week's text by asking, *“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?”* he was

politely suggesting out that his readers had become worldly in their thinking.

But now he is going to go after them w/ bare knuckles,  
& he starts out by calling them “*adulteresses*.”

**As we saw last time, James’ readers include true Xns.**

Some of whom have remained faithful to the Lord;

Others of whom have wandered off into worldliness.

Spiritually speaking, they are betrothed to X, waiting for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when they & the whole Church will be married to X, becoming Jesus’ Bride/His-Wife.

In II Cor 11:2, Paul wrote=> “*I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I **betrothed** you to one **husband**, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.*”

“Betrothal” was like marriage, but w/o physical intimacy.

It took divorce to get out of a betrothal.

From the Jewish perspective of Paul/James’ day, that makes a believer’s unfaithfulness to the Lord, spiritual equivalent of adultery;  
It’s spiritual infidelity.

\* Some of these “Xns” to whom James wrote were undoubtedly “broad road Xns,” who falsely assumed they were true Xns. They went to church, & told people they were believers, but their hearts belonged to the world, not to X.

They weren't really adulterers, because their hearts were never betrothed to X.

- \* Some of them were what Jesus referred to as tares sown among the wheat—hypocrites placed in the Church by Satan to undermine its unity & its doctrinal foundations.
- \* But some of them were true Xns who, instead of growing in godly wisdom, were compromising w/ worldly wisdom—dabbling in worldliness, & these were the true adulterers.

**Adulterers of all kinds almost always avoid facing certain facts, in order to cope w/ the tension of their shameful/indefensible situation, & their feelings of guilt.**

- \* E.g. they avoid thinking about their treachery in violating the solemn promise to keep themselves always/only unto their own spouse.
- \* They avoid the personal character-flaws exposed/revealed by their infidelity/unfaithfulness.
- \* They avoid thinking about the impending/inevitable crisis that awaits them when their immoral treachery becomes publicly known.

**In this text, James forces his spiritually-adulterous readers (of every age) to face certain discomforting facts=>**

- \* Their adultery is treachery against God Himself.
- \* It's treachery against a God who longs for their hearts to love Him as He loves them.

\* It's treachery against a gracious and sovereign God, who still works all things together for their good.

\* **Spiritual Adultery Is Treachery Against God Himself**

James begins by forcing his readers to face the truth that their spiritual adultery w/ the world makes them enemies of the living God they supposedly love.

They are betrothed to Him spiritually, & yet their worldliness is an active hostility against Him.

[James 4:4]=> *"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*

**In the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence here, the words "*a friend*" and "*an enemy*" have been translated as nouns, but they are really adjectives.**

So I prefer the translation *"Whoever might decide to be **friendly** of/with the world makes himself **hostile** of/with God."*

Here we have a professed believer who at some point in the past has decided to be friendly towards the evil world system.

Actual friendship w/ the world is enmity toward God, but in his mind, he hasn't really gone that far.

He's just being friendly toward the world—flirting with it, not having decided to definitely commit himself to it, nor to divorce himself from God.

He views himself as being on the middle ground between  
God/the-world, and prob. even leaning more towards  
God.

He lives among worldly people, he wants to get along w/ them, &  
adjusting to their worldly ways is just the cost of doing that.

He may view himself as seeking a balance between  
“Xn fanaticism” and really sordid/gross forms of  
worldliness.

In fact, his flesh finds the world’s ways/values very  
attractive, so he has assimilated some of those ways  
himself.

He fails to realize that this seemingly harmless attitude of  
compromise w/ the world is really a position of  
betrayal/hostility towards God.

God sees it that way, but he doesn’t, because the  
culture/media have dulled him spiritually.

**This Xn knows w/i himself that this is wrong, which is why  
James asks, “*Do you not know that friendship with the  
world is hostility toward God?*”**

Of course he knows that—it’s a rhetorical question.

“*Know*” here means “to know for certain as an axiomatic truth.”

He knows it on a general/abstract level, but he isn’t willing  
to apply its specific implications to himself.

**This worldly-minded Xn slides easily into compromise.**

He might think to himself, “I don’t have what you’d call an actual friendship relationship w/ the world—just a friendly-relationship w/ it.

Whether/not he’s aware of it, he has taken a stand in his own heart/mind that is committed to this compromise w/ the world.

He views himself as flexible/open, but actually he is quite fixed/rigid.

That’s implied in the 2 words “*wishes*” & “*makes himself*.”

They indicate a fixed decision, not to guard himself and his-heart against the world—to be more open to its influence.

**“*The world*” is the whole system of unregenerate humanity and all its values/morals/views, organized not only to leave God out, but to oppose Him at every turn.**

I Jn 5 says that it lies in the power of the evil one (5:19).

It is a far more dangerous force for evil, than the compromising Xn realizes, or is willing to admit.

God hates it.

It aims man’s life toward self-enjoyment, self-aggrandizement, and disregard-of/hostility-against God.

It focuses man’s mind on self, with “*all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life*” (I Jn 2:16).

The world captures his heart w/ its pleasures, drives it w/  
pride, and cultivates w/i it an  
ambivalence/indifference to God.

For a Xn, anything that crowds X out of his life represents the  
world—cooling his love for Him, for prayer to Him, for  
study of His Word, & for worship of Him, w/ other Xns.  
The world makes all these true Xn priorities secondary to  
him.

It might be some practice that leaves him feeling guilty and  
separated from the Lord—e.g. literal adultery.

It might simply be some otherwise harmless diversion that  
takes his time/attention away from his Lord=>  
an object (car/boat/timeshare), an activity, a goal, a  
relationship.

He becomes like Demas, about whom Paul wrote sadly=>

*“Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me  
and gone to Thessalonica” (II Tim 4:10).*

Most worldly Xns don't actually desert the church;

They just attend it less/less faithfully, because the world  
has them doing so many other things.

**The-world/the-Xn must always be enemies—never friends.**

Jesus said=> *“If you were of the world, the world would love its  
own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you  
out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn 15:19).*

The world only hates Xns who are not worldly themselves.



Xns & the world have conflicting interests that will/must always be at odds=>

- \* We haven't received the spirit of the world, but the Holy Spirit who is from God" (I Cor 2:12).
- \* We are strictly forbidden to love the world (I Jn 2:15).
- \* We're to deny ungodliness & worldly desires (Titus 2:12)
- \* We are not to become conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in the Word, proving what is the will of God (Rom 12:2).
- \* We aren't to allow ourselves to become stained by the world (Jms 1:27).
- \* We are to overcome the world by our faith (I Jn 5:4).
- \* The world is to be crucified/dead to us as it was to Paul (Gal 6:14), & we will always be dead to it.
- \* But we are not to remove ourselves from the world, because X has sent us out to become light to the world (Jn 17:18; Mt 5:14).

**James says that the worldly Xn, in deciding to become friendly w/ the world, has made himself an enemy of God.**

This is his spiritual adultery, & it's a frightening thought, to be declared "God's enemy."

It automatically places him in the position of being God's enemy, whether/not he intends that, or is even aware of it.

But God won't tolerate compromise, nor will the world.

So there really is no middle ground.

The degree to which a Xn becomes friendly w/ the world is the degree to which he defies/opposes God.

If he has truly become born again, he has been reconciled to God, positionally.

Rom 5:10—*“If while we **were enemies** we were **reconciled** to God thru the death of His Son, much more, having **been reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life.”*

But in spite of this reconciliation, he acts like God's enemy once again—his behavior is that of a traitor, an adulterer.

He can expect nothing from God but chastening.

He certainly cannot expect God to answer his prayers because he will always ask w/ wrong motives that he may spend it on his own pleasures (Jms 4:3).

**Anyone who has compromised with the world can never feel truly assured that he really is born again—because he may not be.**

There is a real possibility that he's still truly an unreconciled enemy of God, just deluding himself into thinking he's at peace with God.

I get concerned that this might be true of anyone in this church, because the enemies of God discover too late, that=> *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb 10:31).

Being an enemy of God is the worst thing that could ever happen to a person.

Nahum 1:2 adds=> *“The LORD takes **vengeance** on His adversaries, & He reserves **wrath** for His **enemies**.”*

Beyond that, Psa 68 says=> *“Surely God will shatter the head of His **enemies**, The hairy crown of him who **goes on** in his guilty deeds” (68:21).*

\* Please, don't risk deluding yourself if you're actually an about being an enemy of God.

Ask God to help you search your heart, to make sure that you're not.

Pray as David prayed (Psa 139:23-24)=> *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; / And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.*

\* If you are indeed saved, don't be a spiritual adulterer, refusing to face the shameful fact that your friendliness to the world is really the treachery of adultery against the Savior who died for you, & to whom you are betrothed.

**There's a 2<sup>nd</sup> fact that James forces spiritual-adulterers to face, regarding their treachery.**

**\* Spiritual Adultery Is Against a God Who Longs for Our Hearts**

[Verse 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?’”*

**The first part of this verse means roughly=> “Do you think that Scripture doesn’t really mean what it says...?”**

This is directed at “Teflon Xns” to whom nothing ever sticks.

They don’t take anything that Scripture says too seriously.

Giving them God’s Word is like shooting at a cloud.

It goes in one side, and right out the other, w/o  
having any effect in the meantime.

It’s almost impossible to get through to their hearts,  
because they’ve heard it all before, and they have  
successfully learned to avoid applying it to  
themselves.

They listen, & then they go on with their worldly lives, as if the  
H.S. was just kidding when He inspired the Bible’s words.  
Or at best, as if it’s just a set of suggestions, which they are  
free to take/leave, as they see fit.

James must have been frustrated w/ people like that, because he  
writes this in very emphatic language=> “Do you think that  
to *no purpose* Scripture speaks?”

**The second part of this verse is very difficult to translate &  
even harder to interpret.**

In fact, most commentators consider it the most difficult verse in  
all of *James*, & some, the most difficult verse in the NT.

I won’t drag you through every detail of this  
difficulty/complication, but you might get some sense of it,  
by my mentioning this=>

- \* E.g. the word “*He*” has been added by the translators,  
and it’s not in the original text.
- \* “*The Spirit*” is a nominative, making it the subject.  
It’s not a direct object (as in our translation).
- \* “*Jealously*” is actually not an adverb, but an accusative  
noun & the object of an untranslated preposition  
*pros*, which means *to/toward*.

I readily/quickly admit that I’m not an expert translator.

Far from it!

But just on the basis of what I’ve told you, it seems more  
reasonable to translate the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence like this=>  
“The Spirit, sent to indwell us, longs/desires to the  
point of jealousy.”

**A further complication is found in the words “*jealousy*” and  
“*desires*.”**

“*Jealousy*” occurs in 8 other NT verses, in every one of which  
it has an evil connotation.

E.g. it’s one of the “deeds of the flesh” in Gal 5.

So how can something so evil be associated w/ the H.S.?

Some would answer, it’s because James was talking about  
the jealousy of the human spirit—not the H.S.

So “*Spirit*” shouldn’t be capitalized.

That’s unlikely, since it’s the H.S. that God makes to dwell  
in us as believers.

“*Desires*” occurs in 15 verses other than our verse, and in every one of those cases it has a good/loving connotation.

E.g. in Rom 1:11 it is translated “*long*” where Paul writes

*“I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established.”*

How are we to put something evil (jealousy) together w/

something good (the longings of true love)?

And how are we to apply it all to the H.S.?

What James seems to be saying here our own text is that the Holy Spirit w/i a believer longs with the passionate affection of a lover for our whole heart—even to the point of jealousy.

Godly jealousy, not evil jealousy.

He begrudges the world’s power to compete for our love.

He is grieved when we allow the world to seduce us, away from His influence.

God is not willing to share our affections, & He never has been.

\* In Ex 34, He told Israel=> “*You shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous God**” (34:14).*

\* Deut 4=> “*The LORD your God is a consuming fire, a **jealous God**” (4:24).*

Does this mean that God sins through jealousy?

Absolutely not—He is a holy God, whose jealousy is holy, just as His wrath is holy.

**The H.S., given to indwell us at the moment of our salvation, jealously yearns for our total loyalty to God.**

He claims our undivided/undistracted/wholehearted love,  
because He has every right to that.

This is why the spiritual adultery, of love for the world, is such a  
serious/treacherous/offensive sin.

If we are really saved, the Spirit doesn't just walk away &  
look for someone else to love, leaving us alone to the  
world and to our sin.

He remains & grieves over us, as Hosea must have grieved  
while watching the wife he loved, leave his house in  
search of her lovers.

This is another one of those uncomfortable facts that make clear  
the spiritual adulterer's treachery, which he seeks to avoid  
thinking-about or acknowledging.

And this is why Paul writes in Gal 5=> *"But I say, walk by the  
Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. /  
For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit  
against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one  
another, so that you may not do the things that you please"*  
(Gal 5:16-17).

**\* Spiritual Adultery Is Treachery Against a Gracious and  
Sovereign God**

[Verse 6]=> *"But He gives a greater **grace**. Therefore it says,  
'GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES  
GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.'"*

**Pride is the basis for worldly wisdom; humility is the basis for  
heavenly wisdom.**

\* Worldly wisdom feeds man's pride, and makes it the primary  
motive for all that he does, teaching him to rely on himself.

\* Heavenly wisdom teaches a believer to clothe himself w/  
humility & a contrite spirit, relying on God, not on himself.  
The heavenly-wise are deeply conscious of their sinfulness  
and their need for His help.  
They gladly acknowledge their dependence on Him, resting  
in His sufficiency.  
They revel in God's grace, thanking/worshiping Him for it.

**In verse 6, James is quoting Prov 3:34.**

That text, and its surrounding context, repeatedly show how  
confrontive God is towards pride/the-proud—  
the wicked/crooked, a/w/a scoffers/fools of this  
world.

But it also shows how intimate/gracious He is toward the  
upright, the righteous, the humble.

Of the 7 sins listed in Prov 6, which God abhors as an  
abomination, haughty-pride heads the list (Prov 6:16-17).

**But the good news in our own text is that *“He gives greater  
grace.”***

And that's what a proud/compromising Xn, who is dabbling in  
worldliness, needs.

\* He was saved by grace to begin with.

\* And now that he is accusable of treacherous spiritual  
adultery due to his friendly relationship with God's  
enemy—the world—he needs more grace than ever.

\* Does the Lord give up on this traitor in disgust?



No, he gives him more grace.

\* Does God throw him out of His flock when he wanders off, into the world, banning him forever from the sheepfold?

No, in fact He goes after him, to bring him back, just as Jesus taught in His parable of the lost sheep.

**But professional shepherds sometimes have to break the legs of their wandering sheep, to cure their wandering ways.**

And God's grace in the lives of Xns who wander off into the world, often takes the form of chastening or discipline.

Heb 12 assures us=> *“THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES”* (Heb 12:6).

Then it adds=> *“But if you are **without discipline**, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate children and not sons**”* (Heb 12:8).

The only Xn who really needs to worry about God's discipline is the one who never receives it, because God isn't his Father. He doesn't just dabble in the world—he's part of it, and it's a key part of him.

God disciplines His own, as a loving act of extended grace.

But He doesn't discipline those whose father is the devil.

**I can only imagine the suffocating guilt that adulterers, guilty of literal/physical adultery, must suffer.**

But we all know exactly how a spiritual adulterer feels, because we have often flirted w/ the world, its things, & its ways.

It was bad enough that we sinned so grievously before we were saved, but to continue sinning after we have experienced the wonder of God's love, forgiveness, and grace, is even worse.

That's what makes Xns traitors/adulterers, when we open ourselves up to worldliness.

This text forces us to face the treachery of posturing ourselves as a hostile enemy against holy God, & against His Son, who died for our sin, & to whom we have betrothed/pledged ourselves.

It forces us to face our defiance of the H.S. who longs for us, as the Lover of our souls.

And to face our guilt against gracious/sovereign God.

**But just as we are about to give up on ourselves in utter disgust/discouragement, God gives us greater grace.**

And that is wonderful news.

In the words of Rom 5=> *"Where sin increased, **grace abounded all the more**"* (Rom 5:20).

We have all betrayed the One we love, but His grace covers our sin, as the blood of lambs covered the Law's condemnation at the Mercy Seat of God, over the Ark of the Covenant.

Our sin, no matter how grievous, will never overcome His grace, nor will it ever outlast His grace—He just keeps on giving ever greater grace.

God keeps giving us grace that is higher/deeper/stronger than His grace which we have known in the past, so we need never worry about losing our salvation.

He will never run out of grace, so we will never run out of grace.

We can rejoice, confident that His sovereign/gracious hand will never stop bringing us back, & taking us from strength to strength.

Every day He will have fresh supplies of grace for us, greater than before, to meet the needs of that new day.

In the words of Julia Johnston=>

“Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.”

## ***“Friendly With the World”***

August 26, 2012

Text: James 4:4-6

1. When Israel worshiped idols, God called her an [24 adulteress].

Deut 22:22; I Cor 6:9; I Tim 3:2; Ezek 16:32; Hosea 1; Jms 4:1

2. James’ readers include true Christians, spiritually betrothed to Christ, waiting for the [18 Marriage] Supper of the Lamb.

II Cor 11:2

**In this text James forces his spiritually adulterous readers of every age to face certain discomforting facts...**

### **\* Spiritual Adultery Is Treachery Against God Himself**

**[James 4:4]**

3. Here we have a professed believer who at some point in the past has decided to be [18 friendly] towards the evil world system.

4. “*The world*” is the whole system of unregenerate humanity and all its values, morals, and views, organized not only to leave God out, but to [14 oppose] Him.

I Jn 5:19; 2:16; II Tim 4:10; Jn 15:19; I Cor 2:12; I Jn 2:15; Titus 2:12; Rom 12:2; Jms 1:27; I Jn 5:4; Gal 6:14; Jn 17:18; Mt 5:14

5. James says that the worldly Christian, in deciding to become friendly with the world, has made himself an [12 enemy] of God.

Rom 5:10; Jms 4:3; Heb 10:31; Nahum 1:2; Psa 68:21

### **\* Spiritual Adultery Is Against a God Who Longs for Our Hearts**

**[Verse 5]**

6. This is directed at “Teflon Christians” to whom nothing ever sticks; they don’t take anything that Scripture says too [22 seriously].

7. It seems more reasonable to translate the sentence like this: “The Spirit sent to indwell us [12 longs] and desires to the point of jealousy.”

Rom 1:11; Ex 34:14; Deut 4:24

8. The Holy Spirit, given to indwell us at the moment of our salvation, jealously yearns for our total [16 loyalty] to God.

Gal 5:16-17

**\* Spiritual Adultery Is Treachery Against a Gracious and Sovereign God**  
**[Verse 6]**

Prov 3:34; 6:16-17

9. The good news in our own text is that “*He gives greater grace*”; that’s what a proud Christian who is dabbling in worldliness [12 needs].
10. God’s grace in the lives of Christians who wander into the world often takes the form of [24 chastening] and discipline.  
Heb 12:8; Rom 5:20
11. Our sin, no matter how grievous, will never overcome His grace, nor will it ever outlast His grace—He just keeps on giving ever [16 greater] grace.