

"True Faith and the Believer's Relationship with the World"**James 4:1-12****Part 1**

Introduction: Today we are coming back to our study in the book of James. The last time we were in this study to finish up chapter 3 was May 24th so we need to do a short review to grasp the context of the letter.

The writer of this book is James who was the half brother of Jesus Christ. He wrote this letter to Jewish believers who were scattered. There is really a twofold purpose for the writing of this letter.

1. **It is a letter that teaches believers about practical living.** This letter deals with the situations which we face everyday within our lives and how as children of God we are to deal with those situations.

But there is another underlying theme in this letter that is very important.

2. **It is a series of tests given to the reader as a way to examine his or her salvation.**

I told you before that there are many glimpses of the Sermon on the Mount in this letter. When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount James was there and he was listening very closely. Now one of the concerns of Jesus as He taught the Sermon on the Mount was for people to be sure of their salvation. That very same concern was picked up by James and it also unfolds within this letter.

So far we have looked at True Faith and:

1. Trials and tests - True faith grows in trials and tests.
2. Temptations - True faith does not blame God for temptations.
3. The Word of God - True faith walks in obedience to God's Word.
4. Discrimination - True faith will not show partiality.
5. Works - True faith will manifest itself through righteous works.
6. The tongue - True faith will learn to control the tongue.
7. Wisdom - True faith will show forth Godly wisdom.

That brings us to James chapter 4:1-12.

I. The Theme

Now to understand the thought of James in these verses we must jump ahead in the verses.

Notice James 4:4

Here in this verse we can see the focus of James in this section. The focus is upon the "world". Now we need to understand what James is referring to when he refers to the "world".

He is not talking about the "globe" or the "earth" as we know it. James is talking about the "system" of the world. When I refer to the system of the world I mean the WAYS of the world.

It would be the attitude of the world, the motivation of the world, the desires world, the teaching of the world, the view of the worlds, the morality of the world, the standards of the world.

Let me condense this to help you to understand; it would be the SYSTEM of the world which is under the control of the Satan and flows in a direction that is completely against God and His Word. Let me show you what John wrote concerning the world.

1 John 2:15-16

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Here in John we see something very interesting in verse 16. Those that are in the world are controlled by 3 things which describe the character of the world:

1. **The lust of the flesh.** - They live to satisfy the desires of the flesh.
2. **The lust of the eyes.** - They are controlled by what they see. They see something attractive and they have to have it.
3. **The pride of life.** - The personal driving force is pride. In other words with many people it is all about how others view them.

Now let me show you what Paul says about the SYSTEM of the world in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Here in these verses we can see the dangers of the world's system. The people that are in it are under the influence of the demonic world. Paul makes it clear in this passage that this was the situation that the believers at Ephesus were under in the past.

The same can be said of us who are saved that we also were at one time in the world's system and under the influence of the demonic world. But there is something else which we need to know and that is that a believer can fall back under the influence of the world's system if we are not careful.

Know this; that the world's system is a very powerful system. It can be very attractive and appealing to the sin nature that lives within us.

Let me show you some verses from the book of Revelation that will give us a little deep picture of the world's system.

Revelation 18:1-4

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

² *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

³ *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

⁴ *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

Here in these verses we see the fall of Babylon. This is Commercial Babylon which is the Economic World System. This is what I would call a tentacle of the world's system and there are many more. But the point is that we can see the power of this system in these verses. In verse 2 John tells us it is a HOLD and a CAGE. This tells me it can entrap people. If we then look at verse 4 again we can see that God's people are entrapped in the system.

I point you to all of this to help you to see that it is possible for you and me to get caught up in this world system so therefore we must take heed and be very careful in our lives.

Now let us get back to James again. In James 4:1-12 we are going to consider 3 points.

1. The Results of Worldliness.
2. The Offense of Worldliness.
3. The Remedy for Worldliness.

I. The Results of Worldliness

Notice James 4:1a

James opens this section with two questions. They are both designed to shock them into seeing what was happening in their lives.

In the first question James asks them to consider what is causing the battles within their lives. Now this is not just something that is happening when the believers gather together but it is something that was happening in every area of their lives.

Notice James 4:1b

Here is the reason why there was no peace within their hearts. It was due to their own LUST that was warring in their members. Let me explain what James is saying here.

The word "LUSTS" here actually refers to their "DESIRE FOR PLEASURE". These people had become caught up in the "lust of the flesh" and the "lust of the eyes" and the "pride of life". They were not content with what they had but they desired to the "STUFF" of the world to satisfy the desires of the flesh.

Now this desire for the STUFF of the world was consuming them. It was affecting every area of their lives. It affected them at home, it affected them at work and it affected

them when they gathered to have fellowship. These people were most miserable because they had allowed themselves to be caught in the trap of the world's system. This reminds me of what Peter said about Lot.

2 Peter 2:7-8

⁷ *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:*

⁸ *(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*

Lot had TROUBLED his soul by what he seen and heard in the city of Sodom.

Application:

The very same thing happens to believers today when they get their focus off of God and on the world. They desire things and the desire begins to consume them. They reach for more stuff and because there is no satisfaction in the STUFF of this world frustration sets in. You soul becomes troubled and life becomes miserable because you are looking to fill the emptiness in your life with the THINGS of this world.

If that is you then you have fallen into the snare of this world's system. Let me show you what Paul wrote to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:5-11

⁵ *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

⁷ *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

⁸ *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

⁹ *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

¹⁰ *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

¹¹ *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

Let me show you what the lack of contentment will lead to in our lives.

Notice James 4:2

² *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

Because they lusted after things and could not attain the things or satisfaction James said they were guilty of murder. What does this mean?

Let me remind you again that James heard the Sermon on the Mount. Let me show you something that Jesus said.

Matthew 5:21-22

²¹ *Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

²² *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Jesus is saying here that anger toward someone is the same as murder to God.

1 John 3:15a

¹⁵ *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:*

Notice James 4:2a again.

When James accuses them of killing he is referring to their hatred of other people.

Let me pull this together so you can grasp what James is saying. They were lusting after the STUFF of this world and they were COVETING that which other people had.

The phrase "desire to have" means to "covet". So they looked and saw the prosperity of others and they coveted what others had. They were unable to attain what they desired and so they began to hate others who had that which they desired.

They had fallen into the trappings of the world and it was making them miserable and at the same time it was destroying their testimony. They were arguing and fighting with people in every area of their lives. The sad part is they did not even realize what was happening.

Conclusion:

Let me bring this down to a close and then next week we will pick it up here again.

I don't know what your life is like outside of church but if there is bitterness, hatred, and misery maybe the reason is you have fallen into the entrapments of the world. Maybe you have allowed your focus to come away from Jesus and now it is on the STUFF of this world.

Let me just say there is no way that a believer will ever be at peace while caught in the entrapments of the world. You will be miserable and it will affect every area of your life. It will cause you to be a person that is difficult to deal with and it will destroy your testimony.

Let me remind you that God has given to you what He desires for you to have.

James 1:17

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

For us to complain about what we do not have is to blame God for withholding His goodness from us.

Listen to what I am going to say: to chase after the STUFF of this world is to use your time and energy on STUFF that has no eternal value.

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.