

Not a Friend of This World *James 4:1-10*

James 4:4 reads, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

All that we have considered in this study already against a walk after worldliness leads us to the admonishing rebuke of **James 4:4** – “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Herein we do not simply encounter a Biblical instruction against a pursuit after worldliness. Rather, herein we encounter a sharp rebuke against those believers who have already entered a walk after worldliness. Indeed, herein we encounter a sharp rebuke against those who would be a friend of this present evil world and would walk in friendship with this present evil world.

I. The Friendship of the World

So then, what does it mean to be a friend of the world and to be in friendship with the world? The answer to this question may be discerned by joining together the various passages that instruct against the pursuit of worldliness. In the opening portion of **1 John 2:15**, we are instructed to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” In like manner, in **Colossians 3:2** we are instructed to set our affection “on things above, not on things on the earth.” Thus to set the love and affection of our hearts upon this world and the things of this world is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Again in the opening portion of **2 Corinthians 6:14**, we are instructed to be not “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Thus to join ourselves in such a relationship of unequal yoking is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Again in the opening portion of **2 Corinthians 6:17**, we are instructed to “come out from among” this present evil world, and to be separate. In like manner, through **Psalms 1:1** we are instructed not to walk “in the counsel of the ungodly,” not to “stand in the way of sinners,” and not to “sit in the seat of the scornful.” Thus to walk after this world’s counsels for life is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Thus to pursue acceptance in this crowd is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Thus to be characterized by this world’s scornfulness against the things of the Lord is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Again in the middle portion of **2 Corinthians 6:17**, we are instructed to “touch not the unclean” things of this world. In like manner, in **Ephesians 5:7** we are instructed to be not partakers with this world in their uncleanness; and in **Ephesians 5:11** we are instructed to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.” Thus to join with the world in their spiritually unclean and ungodly ways is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Again in **2 Timothy 2:4** we are instructed not to entangle ourselves “with the affairs of this life;” and in **Mark 4:19** our Lord Jesus Christ defined these worldly entanglements as “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things.” Thus to entangle ourselves in the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world. Finally, in **Romans 12:2** we are instructed to “be not conformed to this world.” Thus to conform our lives unto the philosophies, priorities, patterns, and pursuits of this world is to be a friend of and in friendship with this present evil world.

II. Even of Your Lusts

Yet as we consider the meaning of friendship with this present evil world, we must also remember the foundational motivations for all worldliness. Indeed, as we have previously noted, the three foundational motivations for all worldliness are revealed in **1 John 2:16** – “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.” All of worldliness, all of friendship with this world, is bound up in these three foundational motivations; and all three of these foundational motivations can be summarized as the characteristic of selfishness, as the characteristic of selfish lust and selfish pride. Even so, in the context of **James 4:1-6** we encounter the same foundational motivations of selfish lust and selfish pride. Yet in **James 4:1-6** we do not encounter these foundational motivations of worldliness in the form of a simple list. Rather, we encounter selfish lust and selfish pride in the form of actual behavior. In **James 4:1-2** we encounter selfish lust as a corruption of our interpersonal relationships, generating strife and contention with others. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 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.” Then in **James 4:3** we encounter selfish lust as a corruption of our prayer lives, preventing the Lord our God from answering our prayers. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Finally, in **James 4:6** we encounter selfish pride as a corruption of our Christian walk, stirring up our Lord God’s resistance against us. “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” Indeed, our selfishness, including both selfish lust (desire) and selfish pride, is the true essence of worldliness and friendship with the world in our hearts and lives.

III. The Enemy of God

Now, as we have noted, **James 4:4** communicates a sharp rebuke against worldliness and friendship with the world. So then, how serious a matter is such worldliness and friendship with the world in a believer’s heart and life? The rebuke of God’s Holy Word in **James 4:4** gives answer, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Walking in worldliness and friendship with the world causes a believer also to be walking as an enemy of God. Worldliness and godliness cannot spiritually exist together in our hearts and lives. It is spiritually impossible for us to walk in friendship with the world and in friendship with the Lord our God at the same time. Thus when we are walking as a friend of this present evil world, we are no longer walking in the fellowship of the Lord our God, but are instead walking in enmity with the Lord our God. There are NO spiritual exceptions to this principle. In fact, **James 4:4** repeats the principle twice in order to emphasize its sobering truth. Furthermore, the closing portion of James 4:4 lays the fault directly upon our own willfulness, saying, “Whosoever *will be* a friend of the world” Even so, when we are walking in worldliness and friendship with the world, the Lord our God views us as spiritual “adulterers and adulteresses.” At such times it is a spiritual reality of our willful character and conduct that we are cheating on Him and are dealing treacherously against Him in our spiritual relationship.

Even so, at such times the Lord our God is jealously offended and righteously angered by our worldliness. Thus He stands as a mighty opponent against us. In **James 4:6** the truth is given, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Although the Lord our God pours out His grace abundantly upon His humble and faithful servants, He withholds that grace from those of us who walk in selfish pride and worldliness. When we walk in worldliness and friendship with the world, the Lord our God closes His hand of grace and blessing from us and opens His hand of resistance and discipline against us. At such times His hand of grace and mercy to answer our prayers and to help in our times of need will be withdrawn. Rather, at such times His hand of mighty resistance will press heavy upon us with discipline until we repent of our worldliness.

IV. Submit Yourselves to God

Yet there is another way. We do not have to walk in the unrighteousness way of worldliness and friendship with the world. We can choose rather to walk in the righteous way of humble submission to the Lord our God. We can choose to walk in godliness rather than worldliness. We can choose to walk in fellowship with the Lord rather than in friendship with the world. Even so, God's Word describes this righteous way in **James 4:6-7**, saying, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This is the way of our Lord God's abundant grace upon our lives. This is the way wherein His hand of grace is abundantly opened unto us to enable us for every responsibility and to meet our every need. This is the way wherein we will find that the Lord our God is abundantly generous in giving grace, pouring out more and more and more and more of His grace upon us. Yet this way requires that we deny ourselves. It requires that we deny selfish pride, selfish desire, selfish interest, and selfish ambition. It requires that we deny worldliness and friendship with the world. Rather, it requires that we take up our cross daily. It requires that we walk daily in humility before the Lord our God. It requires that we submit ourselves daily under our Lord God's will, not our own will, for our priorities, passions, plans, and pursuits. It requires that we trust in the Lord with all of our heart and acknowledge Him in all of our ways. (See **Proverbs 3:5-6**)

Then we shall experience and enjoy the abundance of our Lord God's grace. Then we shall experience the grace to resist our adversary the devil with victory over him. Then we shall be strong in the grace of our Lord and in the power of His might. (See **2 Timothy 2:1 & Ephesians 6:10**) Then we shall be able to stand victoriously "against the wiles of the devil" and shall be able to quench "all the fiery darts of the wicked." (See **Ephesians 6:11, 16**) Then we shall experience the grace of God for us not to be overcome by the devil, but for the devil to flee from us in defeat. Then also we shall enjoy the spiritually high and holy place of our Lord God's wondrous and blessed fellowship. Indeed, then we shall find that more we draw nigh unto the Lord our God in humble submission, the more He will draw nigh unto us in gracious fellowship.

V. Cleanse and Purify Yourselves

Yet what are we to do if we have already gone astray from our Lord after the friendship of worldliness? Is there a way out from our Lord's heavy hand discipline and resistance against us? Is there a way back into our Lord's gracious fellowship? Indeed, there certainly is. In fact, **James 4:1-10** was originally written unto believers who had gone away backward from

the Lord into the ways of selfish pride, selfish desire, and selfish interest. Indeed, **James 4:1-10** was originally written unto believers who were worthy of the Lord's sharp rebuke against their worldliness and friendship with the world. Even so, **James 4:1-10** was specifically written unto such believers in order to instruct them concerning the way back unto the Lord's gracious fellowship. Thus **James 4:8-10** gives the instruction, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Herein we encounter five steps for returning and drawing nigh again unto a walk of fellowship with the Lord our God.

First, we must recognize our departure from the fellowship of the Lord our God. At the beginning of **James 4:8** the instruction is given, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Yet within the immediate context, this instruction was not given unto believers who were already walking in fellowship with the Lord God, so as to invite and instruct them to draw yet closer and closer unto the Lord their God. Rather, within the context this instruction was given to believers who were walking apart from the Lord's daily fellowship. As we have noted, they were walking after their own selfish lust and selfish pride. (See **James 4:1-3, 6**) As such, they were walking in worldliness and in friendship with this present evil world. (See **James 4:4**) Even so, they were walking at enmity with the Lord God and were rebuked by God as spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. (See **James 4:4**) Thus the opening instruction of **James 4:8** was not that they should draw yet closer and closer unto the Lord their God. Rather, it was that they should recognize their departure from His daily fellowship, and that they should desire to return unto that daily fellowship. Even so, when we are walking after selfish lust and selfish pride in worldliness and friendship with the world, we also are called to recognize that we have indeed departed from a walk of fellowship with the Lord our God. We are called to recognize that we are indeed walking at enmity with the Lord our God and that His hand of resistance is heavy against us. We are called to recognize that we are NOT right with God and that He is NOT pleased with us at all. We are called to recognize and remember the fellowship from which we have departed, and to repent and return unto it.

Second, we must acknowledge the sinfulness of our friendship with this evil world. In **James 4:8** the second instruction is given, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." Herein the instruction is that they should spiritually cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. Yet there is also the assessment of their spiritual character, for the Lord addressed them as "ye sinners" and as "ye double minded." As such, they were called to acknowledge the sinfulness of their ways. They were called to acknowledge the sinfulness of their selfish lust and selfish pride and of their worldliness and friendship with the world. Even so, when we are walking after selfish lust and selfish pride in worldliness and friendship with the world, we are called to acknowledge the sinfulness of our ways also. We are called to acknowledge that in the sight of the Lord our God, we are indeed in a condition of sinfulness and spiritual double-mindedness. We are called to acknowledge that our selfishness and worldliness is indeed a sinful offense against the Lord our God. We are called to acknowledge that we do indeed need the spiritual cleansing of our hands, because our actions and living has indeed been spiritually unclean. We are called to acknowledge that we do indeed need the spiritual purifying of our hearts, because our attitudes and motivations have indeed been spiritually impure. Yeah, we are called to acknowledge that we have indeed committed the filthiness of spiritual adultery against the Lord our God.

Third, we must repent with a broken heart over our selfish desire for worldly pleasures. In **James 4:9** the third instruction of the passage is given, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.” A common instruction of the New Testament is that we believers should joy and rejoice in the Lord our God always. Yet as we have noted, this context was written unto believers who not walking in fellowship with the Lord; therefore, they could not rightly rejoice in the Lord. Apart from fellowship with the Lord, there is no rejoicing in the Lord. Rather, they were walking in the sinfulness of their selfish and worldly ways; therefore, they were called to mourn and weep over their sinfulness before the Lord. They were called to be afflicted in heart before the Lord. Even so, when we are walking after selfish lust and selfish pride in worldliness and friendship with the world, we also are called to repent of that sinfulness with a broken heart and contrite heart. We are called to let the laughter and joy that we had in the selfish pleasures of sin and worldliness be turned into mourning and brokenness over the sinful offense of our sin and worldliness. We are called to view our selfish, worldly behavior from the perspective of the Lord our God, rather than the perspective of our selfish flesh.

Fourth, we must humble ourselves in the sight of our gracious Lord God. In the opening portion of **James 4:10**, the fourth instruction of the passage is given, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.” Certainly we are to walk in humility before the Lord our God at all times in our daily living. However, this context is specifically written to believers who have departed from the fellowship of the Lord, in order to instruct them concerning the way back unto the Lord’s gracious fellowship. Thus the instruction of **James 4:10** specifically concerns the humility of broken-hearted repentance. Indeed, this is the humility of one who does not attempt to excuse his or her sin, and who does not attempt to shift the blame for his or her own sin. This is the humility of one who honestly acknowledges personal fault and sinful offense against God. This is the humility of one who accepts the punishment of the Lord without complaint. (See **Leviticus 26:40-41**) This is the humility of one who depends completely upon the Lord’s grace and mercy for forgiveness and cleansing, and upon nothing else. (See **Psalms 51:1**) This is the humility of one who now desires a clean heart before the Lord, who now desires to be transformed unto godliness in character, who now desires the daily fellowship of the Lord as his or her highest priority. Yeah, this is the humility of one who now desires to please and serve the Lord above all else.

Fifth, we must trust in God’s gracious promise to restore us unto His fellowship. In the closing portion of **James 4:10**, the conclusion and promise is given, “And he shall lift you up.” This is the promise of **Psalms 51:17** – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” This is the promise of **1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This is the promise of **Proverbs 28:13** – “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” This is the promise of **Isaiah 55:6-7** – “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” This is the promise of **Isaiah 57:15** – “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” This is the gracious promise of our Lord upon which we are to depend with all of our heart.