

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 04: 4-6

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thanks to the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read James Chapter 4, today we will read verses 4-6.

James in 4:1-3 reminds us that the wars and fights among the church are caused by our desires for pleasure. James specifically uses the term "desires for pleasure that war" to emphasize the aggressive and exclusive nature of such desires. These desires lead to jealousy and conflicts within the church. Not only do wars and fights arise from these desires, which are evident, but even the things we ask for and do not receive are often due to these desires.

Here, James broadens the definition of desires for pleasure to include anything that is not in accordance with God's will. In James's view, all such things are desires for pleasure; bringing these matters before God is asking amiss, and God will not answer such prayers. After dealing with desires for pleasure, in verses 4-6, James goes on to address the world.

Verse 4: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The original word for "adulterers and adulteresses" is simply "adulteresses," and James seems to be addressing the saints here, speaking to them directly. "You adulterers and adulteresses," or more directly, "You adulteresses," is a very harsh accusation. Who, then, is James addressing? James goes on to say, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. It turns out James is referring to those Christians who love the world.

The Greek word for "world" is "kosmos", which is often translated as "world" in English, and in most other places in the Chinese Union Version it is also translated as "world." I will use the word "world" in my following sharing. The Greek word "kosmos" originally meant "ordered system." Satan has usurped God's creation and systematized it, producing a value system centered on Satan.

God's original creation was full of life, with all things coexisting harmoniously and vibrantly. But in the world controlled by Satan, he has converted people, events, and things into a single value, or rather, money, and arranged them in order for his easy control, resulting in a mechanical, rigid, and cold-hearted world.

James calls those Christians who are friendly with the world "adulteresses," which is indeed a very harsh title. Why? In Isaiah 54:5-6, it says, "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God. In the Old Testament, God regards the Israelites as His wife, and a wife who turns away from her husband would be called an adulteress. That's why in the book of Hosea, God asks Hosea to marry an adulteress, which is a prefiguration of the Israelites.

In the New Testament, regarding the New Testament church, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." It turns out that the church is a chaste virgin to be presented to Christ as a wife. When Christians become friendly with the world controlled by Satan, it's like a woman transferring her affections to another, hence James calls them adulteresses, committing spiritual adultery. And not just adultery, James says they have become enemies of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus says in John 15:18-19 that the world hates us because we are not of the world. The Lord has chosen us out of the world, but He still lets us remain in the world. Then in John 16:33, He tells us that in the world we will have tribulation, but in Him, we have peace because He has overcome the

world. The Lord wants us to live a life in the world that is not of the world—in the world but not of the world, meaning we should live a victorious and transcendent life in the world.

Actually, it is not only James who tells us not to be friends with the world; John also says in 1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” In verse 2:16, John further summarizes the things in the world into three categories: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” making it easier for us to remember what the things of the world are and to learn to avoid them.

Not loving the world and not being friends with the world is truly difficult for Christians living in the world. We unconsciously get assimilated by the world, and we are unknowingly carried away by the trends of the world. Therefore, passive rejection and avoidance are very difficult to succeed in.

Psalms 37:4 says, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” The psalmist teaches us to delight in the Lord, and He will guard us. Luke 1:46-47 says, “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’” Mary was able to delight in God, and she was able to conceive and give birth to Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Paul also says in Romans 5:11, “And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Paul tells us to rejoice in God through Jesus Christ. Here we see that only when our hearts are filled with God and He becomes our joy will this joy surpass anything we can experience in the world. Only when we have truly tasted the best will we have the power not to love the world and not to be friends with the world.

Verse 5: "Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'?"

James begins by asking if we think the Scripture speaks in vain. However, the words James quotes cannot be found in the Old Testament. My understanding is that after James read some Old Testament scriptures, he had a new insight, and his insight is entirely consistent with the views of John and Paul.

James first mentions, "The Spirit who dwells in us," referring to the Spirit that John repeatedly emphasizes in his Gospel as the Comforter, which is the Spirit of life, the Spirit of truth. This Spirit was breathed into the disciples by Jesus Christ on the evening of the day of His resurrection. This is recorded in John 20:22, "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" That was a historical breath, and from then on, all who believe in Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit, and this Holy Spirit dwells within us and guides us in our daily lives.

James continues by saying this Spirit "yearns jealously." In the Old Testament, God repeatedly declares that He is a jealous God. The term "jealous" in the Chinese Union Version is translated as "忌邪," while in English, it is translated as "jealousy." For example, in Exodus 20, when God gave the Ten Commandments, the second commandment is recorded in Exodus 20:5, "For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God." The KJV translates it as "For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God," which could be directly translated as "a jealous God" to be more accurate.

God loves us like a husband loves his wife, and when the wife is unfaithful, God also feels jealousy. This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy." The term "godly jealousy" in English can be directly translated as "God's jealousy."

Therefore, the Scripture is very clear that God is a loving and jealous God. Regarding the term "jealous," our general impression is often negative because human love is limited and flawed. Human jealousy born out of love can lead to bad outcomes due to these flaws. However, God's love is eternal, unconditional, and selfless. When God's love leads to jealousy, because His love is perfect, this jealousy will result in more grace.

Verse 6: "But He gives more grace. Therefore, He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

James begins by saying, "But He gives more grace." In James' view, God is a God of love who loves to the point of jealousy. When He becomes jealous, He is even more willingly to win you back; therefore, He pours out more grace. We must understand that human jealousy is different from God's jealousy. Human jealousy brings revenge and harm, but God's jealousy brings more grace. Man is created as a vessel, and God wants to fill this vessel with His grace so that man will not be tempted by the world and follow its trends.

However, to be filled with God's grace, man must also take responsibility. James continues, "Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" Here, James is quoting Proverbs 3:34, "Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble." James changes "scornful" to "proud," and Peter in 1 Peter 5:5 also quotes the same scripture, changing it to "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James' statement is entirely consistent with Peter's.

A proud person thinks highly of himself and considers himself self-sufficient; his heart is closed to God. Therefore, no matter how much grace God pours out, it cannot flow into his heart. A humble person, not only is his heart open to God, but he also takes a very low position, allowing the flow of grace to easily enter his heart, filling his vessel with God's grace.

Dear brothers and sisters, God truly loves us; He is a God who loves to the point of jealousy. When we are attracted by the world and want to be friends with the world, God will give us more grace to help us know Him better, experience Him more, and thus escape the temptations of the world. However, we must also take responsibility; we must remain humble in heart to become vessels that can be filled with God's grace.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You. You want us to live in the world but not of the world. We understand that this world is under Satan's control, and he continually tempts us with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. We are often weak and unconsciously attracted by the world. Help us to recognize that

we cannot be friends with the world or love the world because that would be committing spiritual adultery. Give us a humble heart so that through Your grace, we may know You better, experience You more, and enjoy the joy that comes from heaven. May this joy keep us from the world's temptations, enabling us to love and follow You purely. Help me live a life that pleases You. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray.