

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
James: A Sermonic Call Unto Practical Godliness
Part VII: Choosing Godliness Over Worldliness
(James 4:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. 1 John 2:15 call us believers in Christ not to love the godless world and the godless things that are in it!
- B. James 4:1-12 explains what worldliness is in one's daily experience, and how to overcome it (as follows):

II. Choosing Godliness Over Worldliness, James 4:1-12.

- A. The problem James addressed in James 4:1-12 as stated in James 4:4b was friendship with the world.
- B. Considering this friendship with the world in James 4:4b with what 1 John 2:15a states about worldliness, we know the battle for the believer regarding the world is a battle of what he does with his **love** -- whether he **loves God OR the godless world** and **all** it **contains**, James 4:4b with 1 John 2:15a, 16.
- C. As such, James describes the **cause** of such a **misplaced love** in **worldliness** in James 4:1-3 as follows:
 - 1. Quarrels and fights among believers arise from ungodly desires that are at war in them, Jas. 4:1 NIV. Thus, the lusts of the sin nature start the wrongful love of godless lusts for the world, cf. 1 John 1:8, 10.
 - 2. These lusts play an unsavory role in the believer's relationships as described in James 4:2 (as follows):
 - a. When a believer has an ungodly passion for something, and he fails to obtain gratification of this desire, he eventually badly mistreats ("kill") another party who has what he covets, James 4:2a.
 - b. Unable to acquire what belongs to the other party, the frustrated believer quarrels and fights to take by force what he lusts, but he cannot gain it since he does not ask God to satisfy his need, Jas. 4:2b.
 - c. However, praying to fulfill his desire in this case is futile simply because the desire itself is sinful, so God refuses to grant the prayer request if the believer only prays to satisfy his lusts, James 4:3.
- D. Having identified the problem as **worldliness** in James 4:4b, James described its **cure** in James 4:4-12:
 - 1. James noted how friendship with the world, worldliness, makes one a spiritual adulterer or adulteress, for worldly covetousness is a form of idolatry, a form of holding to the world and its lust-gratifying items as false idols instead of looking to the Lord for fulfillment, James 4:4a,b; Colossians 3:5.
 - 2. James 4:5-6a is a very difficult passage to understand, but the NIV reasonably concludes it means the sinful human spirit tends to envy, producing the unsavory battles just described, but God gives more grace in overcoming this battle of worldliness, Bible Knowledge Commentary, N. T., p. 830.
 - 3. Accordingly, the grace of God is activated when the believer who is afflicted by worldliness humbles himself in recognition that he has sinned and needs God's help, and God ceases to resist blessing him in his former worldliness and He begins to bless the repentant believer, James 4:6b,c.
 - 4. By God's grace, the believer takes the following practical steps for victory over the world, Jas. 4:7-10:
 - a. The believer must submit himself to God versus adhering to a love for the world, James 4:7a.
 - b. The believer must resist the devil who tempts him to love the world and its lusts, resisting Satan by trusting God and His Word for victory over Satan's wiles, James 4:7b; 1 Peter 5:8-9.
 - c. The believer must draw nigh to God, cleansing himself from worldliness, James 4:8; 1 John 1:9.
 - d. The believer must thus **truly** humble himself as will be evidenced in his being afflicted upon noting that he is worldly so that in true humility, God will lift him up in cleansing and blessing, Jas. 4:9-10.
- E. In victory over worldliness, the believer must take practical steps to renew proper actions, James 4:11-12:
 - 1. The repentant believer must no longer speak evil against fellow believers, for doing so judges his brother, and that causes him to speak evil against God's righteous law and to judge it as the law forbids us to mistreat one another this way, James 4:11a, b.
 - 2. Judging the law of God makes us a judge, and that usurps God's role as Sole Lawgiver, and He is able to save and to destroy those under His law, making all such judgment on our part futile, James 4:12.

Lesson: Worldliness entails a battle of our love -- whether we choose to gratify our lusts for this world or to love God and to find in Him all the blessing we need. We must then oppose Satan's wiles and our sinful nature's lusts for worldliness by God's grace, choosing to love God in humble contentment.

Application: May we overcome a love for this world by loving God through His gracious provisions!