

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

**Friendship with the World  
James 4:1-6  
Part Six**

We are back once again to the Epistle of James. And we will once again look at **James 4:1-6**.

**(1) "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? (2) You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (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. (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?" (6) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** In these verses James gives to us one more test of living faith. James gives to us one more test of saving faith. And what is that test? We have called it the "Friendship with the World test."

Genuine spiritual life and faithful Christian living involve separation from the world and all its countless contaminations. If we can remain unstained by the world, the genuineness of our faith will be clearly evident and we will pass this very important test.

One of the ways that we can know if we have become a friend of the world is if our various relationships are characterized by turmoil.

First of all, turmoil in our relationship with others. What does **James 4:1** say? **"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?"**

Secondly, turmoil in our relationship with ourselves. What does **James 4:1-3** say? **"(1) What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? (2) You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.** Interpersonal conflicts are fueled by an internal conflict. James identifies three causes of this internal conflict.

The first cause is uncontrolled desire.

Look at the end of **V. 1** **".... Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ....."**

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The second cause is unfulfilled desire (V. 2)

Look at V. 2 **“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”**

The third cause is selfish desire (VV. 2-3)

Let us look at verse 2 and then also read verse 3. **“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. Then it says, “.... You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”**

James in this section of Scripture is stating the obvious. Those uncontrolled and unfulfilled desires that we might experience are selfish. And James is very quick to point out in respect to prayer that when we pray with selfish desires, our prayers are worthless.

Praying according to the will of God is the underlying condition for successful praying. It is the man whose heart supremely yearns for God’s glory and the accomplishment of His will who prays meaningfully and effectively. **1 John 5:14, “And this is the confidence that we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”**

There are a number of prayer promises that Christ gives us in the Gospels, but it is important to note that each of these promises is conditional and is really just another way of stating 1 John 5:14. How did Christ restate 1 John 5:14 in the Gospels?

CHRIST RESTATED 1 JOHN 5:14 AS “HAVING FAITH IN GOD.” We find this condition stated in the story of the powerless disciples in Matt. 17:20-21 and Mark 9:23-29 , and then we find it again in the story of the withered fig tree in Matt. 21:18-22 and Mark 11:20-24. Having faith in God is believing that He knows what is best for our lives in light of who we are and what we are facing. Because of this confidence our desire will be that His will would be done rather than our’s. What is another instance of Christ restating 1 John 5:14?

CHRIST RESTATED 1 JOHN 5:14 AS “ABIDING IN CHRIST.” Though implied elsewhere, it is explicitly stated in **John 15:17 “If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”**

The word “abide” (MENO) is found in the New Testament predominately in the writings of the Apostle John. It is used ninety-three times in the New Testament, and sixty-three of those are in John’s writings. Abide (MENO) carries the basic meaning “to remain.” The idea is to remain in vital contact with someone or something. In John’s writings, the “abide in ” construction is used to depict the spiritual relationship existing between Christ and the Father, and between Christ and the believer.

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The phrase “to abide in ” depicts one person wholly joined with, totally submissive to, and dependent upon another. It involves being under the power and influence of another.

But how can we know whether or not we are meeting this particular condition ? How do we know if we are in fact “Abiding in Christ”? Look at the next part of the verse, **“If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”** We can know that we are abiding in Christ when His words are abiding in us. We cannot say that we are abiding in Christ if His words are not abiding in us. And we cannot say that His words are abiding in us if we are not abiding in Christ. To abide in Christ is to have His words abide in us.

“Words” (RHEMA) could also just as well be translated “sayings.” The significance of RHEMA (as distinct from LOGOS) is exemplified in the injunction to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word (RHEMA) of God,” in Eph. 6:17. The reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual Scripture, which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in the time of our need.

If I were to ask you this weekend, “Are Christ’s words abiding in you?,” how would you answer that question? What things might characterize the life of someone who has the words of Christ abiding in them? I believe **Joshua 1:8** describes such a person. Listen to these words **“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”**

Those who have the words of Christ abiding in them will, I believe, manifest two very important characteristics which are both contained in **Joshua 1:8**.

First, they will be continually feeding and reflecting upon the Scriptures. What does **Joshua 1:8** tell us, **“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night....”**

And secondly, they will be seeking to apply the specific teachings or sayings of the law to their lives. Look again at the verse, **“.... so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.”**

Do these characteristics describe you? Are you meditating on the law day and night and are you striving to conform yourself to it’s teachings? If this describes you, then you can be relatively assured that the “words of Christ” indeed are “abiding in you” and you are therefore “abiding in Christ.” If these characteristics do not describe you, then you can be relatively assured that the “words of Christ” indeed are not “abiding in you” and you are therefore “not abiding in Christ.”

We do not have a blank check when we come to the Lord in prayer, and those who are abiding in Christ certainly do not approach God with this mentality. Their desire is singular. And what is that desire? Their singular desire is this, **“Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** Those who are abiding in Christ and whose words are abiding in them do not want their will to be done, they want God’s will to be done.

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But someone might say, “If this is true then why pray at all? God is going to do what he has purposed to do with or without our prayers.”

Let me ask you this question: What is the mechanism that God has sovereignly instituted to unleash His power in the performance of His revealed will? Prayer is God’s mechanism that He has interwoven with His internal sovereign plan to accomplish His revealed will. I know this because He repeatedly calls us to pray and tells us that our prayers will be effectual when praying according to His revealed will. If we choose not to pray for His revealed will to be done, then we certainly expose ourselves to the possibility that His revealed will might not ever be done in or through our earthly lives.

If I come to a worship service such as I did a few weeks ago and I heard a message on greeting, and I became convinced based on the study of God’s word that it was God’s revealed will for me to greet the brethren with a “holy hello” or a “holy handshake,” then what do I need to do with that conviction? I need to pray that I would be given the grace to greet the brethren even if it might be difficult for me, and I should continue to pray in this way until I am doing exactly what I believe the Lord has called me to do in respect to His Word.

If, in the course of my study of God’s Word, I come to the conviction that it is God’s revealed will for me in Christ Jesus to stay in a difficult marriage, then what do I need to do with that conviction? I need to pray that I would be given the grace to do exactly that.

If I am truly abiding in Christ and if His words are truly abiding in me, how likely will it be that my life will be transformed in these areas if I pray? I am absolutely certain that I will be transformed in these areas even if it means that the Lord would have to remove a mountain and cast it into the sea, it will be done.

But let me ask you this question: What kind of results would you expect in a person’s life who may have been convicted from the Scriptures about their failure to greet the brethren or convicted from the Scriptures about their need to stay in a difficult marriage but who has failed to pray about either on any consistent basis? The results will be marginal at best.

I am very concerned that so many of the prayers that professing Christians are praying have very little to do with God’s revealed will being accomplished, but have much more to do with their own desires.

Certainly it is not wrong for us to express to the Lord requests based on our desires. Certainly Paul did that when he asked the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh in **2 Cor. 12:7-10**. But when our praying is predominated by our desires rather than by prayers based upon God’s revealed will, we are not praying from a position of strength but rather of weakness.

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### CONCLUSION

We must be careful not to become contaminated by the world, abandoning the practice of prayer, because we trust in ourselves more than in the promises of God.

We must be careful that we would not become contaminated by the world so that when we pray our prayers are being driven by selfish desires.

But we remember this..... **John 15:17, “If you abide in me, and My words abide in you ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”**