

James

A Jealous Yet Gracious God

March 11, 2012

I. Introduction

A. **James 4:1-10** . . . 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." [7] Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

B. Prayer

II. Review From Last Sunday

A. Last Sunday we talked about **James 4:4**, a verse in which God uses very strong language to depict our ungodly thinking, our fleshly desires, and our pursuit of worldly and sinful pleasures. And God is speaking to us in this way specifically in relation to the way we deal with conflict. God says that when we choose to go our own way and the way of the world in defiance and rejection of His way, He calls us adulteresses who, in our adultery are committing an act of hostility toward Him, which by its nature, makes us His enemy.

1. Now I understand that we are not prone to think of our selfish, fleshly, and worldly choices as acts of adultery and hostility. Nor do we think of our choice to sin as choosing to make ourselves God's enemy. It is also probable that some of us do not see ourselves as committing any sins that even comes close to being of such a grave nature as to deserve the kind of labels God uses in **James 4:4**.

2. Given the fact that we are not prone to apply these strong labels to ourselves, I realize how challenging it is to get God's intended message across to you in a way that makes it easy for you to see its truth, and then value it enough to apply its truth to yourself.
3. Yet in spite of the difficulty involved, I still believe it is important for us to understand that our sin, our selfishness, our waywardness, our worldliness, our unwillingness to do things God's way, when viewed in light of the marriage relationship we have with God, is rightly labeled adultery, hostility, and making ourselves God's enemy.
 - a. And why do I believe it is important to understand and personally accept this? Because understanding and accepting this truth opens the door for us to see and care about an even greater truth.
 - b. And that greater truth – a truth which I long for you to believe and care deeply about, is this: Our sin is, first and foremost, against God. He experiences it as unfaithfulness. He feels the pain of it just as a husband or wife feels the pain of their spouses' act of adultery.
 - c. And because He is both our husband and our Lord (*Master*), He experiences our adultery as an act of unfaithfulness and as an act of hostility against Him.
 - d. And because we join forces with God's arch enemy, the devil, when we turn to go our own way, we make ourselves God's enemy.
4. I want to return to my statement that our sin hurts God. It is not uncommon for Christians to think that God is God, and nothing fazes Him. Maybe you think this way also. Therefore, I want us to look at some scripture references to show you the mind and heart of God on this matter.
 - a. In **Ezekiel 6:9**, God says that He has been **hurt (*crushed, broken*)** by the **adulterous hearts** of the Israelites.
 - b. **Psalms 78:40** says that the generation of Israelites who refused to go into the Promised Land not only rebelled against God, they **grieved Him** as well. To grieve someone is to do something that causes them to suffer great sorrow and sadness – even to the point of mourning and weeping.
 - c. In **Isaiah 63:10** we read again that Israel's rebellion **grieved** God's Holy Spirit.
 - d. In the NT, God warns us against doing anything that would **grieve** the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30**).
5. My point is simply this: The scriptures teach that God not only sees, He feels our rejection, our rebellion, our distrust of Him, and our

adultery in choosing the pleasures of our flesh and world over Him. You see, God feels our sin just as much as Jesus felt the lash of the whip, the thorns of the crown, the blows of the fists, the weight of the cross on his flesh torn shoulders, the nails through his hands and feet, and the unfathomable pain of God forsaking Him.

- B. If God feels our sin this much, what ought our response to be? I am convinced that we should care that God feels our sin like this, which is why it is important to me that I label my sin as God labels it. And of course, this is why I long for you, too, to label your sin as God labels it. After all, how can we come to the place of loving our precious heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength if we do not care, or are careless about how our sin effects Him?
1. With this in mind, I want to give you three reasons why caring about God's feelings **now** should be important to each one of us.
 2. **First**, caring about how my thoughts, choices, and behavior effects my wife is a vital part of loving my wife. In the same way, caring about how my behavior effects God is a vital part of my loving Him. If I don't care, or if I ignore the fact that my sin hurts God, that it breaks His heart, that it feels to Him like selfishness, rebelliousness, and adultery, then the reality is, I am the most important person in my life, and I love myself, first and foremost.
 - a. The reality is, no one can love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength while loving himself more than God.
 - b. Now I am not suggesting that any of us will perfectly love God in this life. And I am not saying that we are failures in loving God if we do not perfectly love Him. But we know that there is a clear difference between (1) sincerity of attitude and effort, in relation to love, (2) and an insincerity which claims love but persistently goes its own way in one or more areas for purely selfish reasons.
 - c. When we care about how our sin effects God, we will go to war against the one or two or five persistent areas of selfishness and sin that we known still thrive in us.
 - d. And this is what I long to be true for each one of us – that we would want to love God as we ought, and want to care about how our sin effects Him, for surely it is when we sincerely want these things that we will do what is necessary to act on what we want.
 - e. May it be true of us that we have come to the place of loving God so much that we no longer compromise that love by any known, persistent adulteress behavior.

- f. For me personally, using God's language about my selfishness and sin helps me clearly and undeniably see that my behavior affects God; which in turn prompts me to care about how my behavior affects Him; which in turn motivates me to change my behavior in order to stop hurting the One I love, or at least know I ought to love with all my being. And because I need all the help I can get in coming to that place where I hold God as my most precious treasure and love Him with all my being, using God's language in regard to my sin seems very wise to me.
3. The **second** reason why caring about God's feelings **now** should be important to each one of us is that if we don't care **now**, one day we will wish we had.
- a. In the last half of **Ezekiel 6:9**, God says that when Israel comes to their senses, as a result of His judgement on them, they will **loathe themselves** for the evils and abominations which they have committed against Him.
 - b. This is an important point for each of us to seriously consider, because what God is telling Israel, and us as well, is that we can either loathe our sin and loathe ourselves for sinning against God **now**, which gives us sufficient time to do the right thing about it, or we can wait until God's judgment finally gets our attention.
 - (1) If God's judgment gets our attention in this life, we will have lost precious, irretrievable time for loving God, but all will not be lost because we still have time to amend our ways.
 - (2) If we do not come to our senses until the final Judgment Day, it will be too late to amend our ways and we will loathe ourselves **then** for being so foolish and selfish **now**.
 - c. Without question, a day of judgment is coming, and there is no doubt that for some of us it will be worse than for others. If our name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, then this judgment will not determine whether we go to heaven or to hell. That is already settled.
 - d. However, for us Christians – those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life – this judgment will reveal what we have done while living as a Christian here on this earth. It will reveal our growth toward Christ-likeness and our godly service to our Lord Jesus. It will expose our undealt with sins, including the ones we hid from everyone, except God. It will force us to face the truth about where we persisted in deliberate rebellion or in denial and self-deceit regarding certain thoughts, desires, choices, and behavior.

It will determine our rewards. And it will fix our eternal status or standing before God. For example, to be saved as though by fire (**I Corinthians 3:15**) may bring the comfort of eternal life in heaven, but imagine living with that label in the presence of God and your fellow believers for the rest of eternity.

- e. Which brings us back to my second point. I urge you not to wait until Judgment Day to finally face up to your persistent sins which you refused to deal with while still alive in this world.
 - (1) You do now want to spend eternity knowing that you could have loved God more fully and you could have put away your persistent and ungodly thoughts, desires, and deeds, but didn't.
 - (2) And so I urge you, if not for the love of God, then for the fear and shame brought on by the final Judgment, loathe your undealt with, persistent sin now, while there is time to put it out of your life and put on Christ in its place.
- 4. The **third reason** why caring about God's feelings **now** should be important to each one of us is that it is an important part of the mindset which motivates us to put away all known persistent sin so that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him. But putting away sin and living for God is only the beginning of entering in to what God has in store for us as His children. It is as we live for God, day-by-day, that we come into the abundant Christian life.
 - a. Think about this: it is the pure in heart who see God. It is the righteous whose prayers touch the heart of God so that He hears and answers. It is the godly who enjoy the provision, protection, security, and healing of God. It is those who have put away the practice of all known sin who become vessels for honor, and therefore useful to God for His service.
 - b. It is those who trust in God and live according to God's will who have the inner peace of God, contentment with God, empowerment for godly living, and the fulness of the Holy Spirit. It is those who live up to what they know who come to know more about God and God's word than the best theologians.
 - c. It is those who love God who deem Him their most precious treasure, who want to please Him in all they do, and who feel the pain of their own failings and sinfulness because of what it does to God.
 - d. And best of all, these are the kind of beliefs, thinking, and activities on our part that bring us into the personal, intimate

presence of God which allows us to gain a kind of fellowship with Him that defies description, and that makes you long for more. And I am not talking about a fellowship with God that is only known in heaven. I am talking about a fellowship with God that you can experience today – if you will live as those who hate their sin and love their God.

- C. This kind of intimate fellowship with God is a prize you will never regret laying hold of – though it will cost you dearly in relation to any selfish desires or fleshly longings that you are currently clinging to because you hold them dear.
 - 1. Do you want to love God with all your being? Do you want to care about how your sin affects God? Do you want to put away the last of your persistent sins so that you are no longer willfully practicing any known sin? Are you willing to put in the effort required to see your wants become realities?
 - 2. If you want God to be the supreme love of your life and are willing to do your part in getting to that place with God, He will abundantly supply you with all the power, encouragement, scripture, support, conviction – when you need reminding that you are moving away from Him, and protection from excessive temptation needed to fulfill your part.
 - 3. And beyond that, God will hear and answer your prayers for His added help beyond what He is already doing for you.

III. Conclusion

- A. It is my heart's desire that each of us would love God as fully as it is humanely possible for each one of us to love Him. This is why I took today's teaching time to go back over this material – even though you have heard it in one form or another before.
- B. In my pursuit of God and a proper love for God, I have found it very helpful to use God's language about my sin, and to care about how my sin affects Him. Therefore, I urge you, loathe your sin and yourself now, while there is time to change. If you do, you will not lack for comfort.
- C. Finally, the words I am about to read to you have stayed with me for years, and have been food for my motivation to persevere in pursuing a right love for God: ***“My Jesus, I love Thee. I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.”***
- D. May we love nothing more than God, who loved nothing more than our salvation and the hope of a love relationship throughout eternity.