Sermon Notes

A TEST OF SAVING FAITH:
ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORLD (PART 1)
James 4:4

Introduction
• A continuation of thoughts expressed previously in the last part of Chapter 3 on earthly wisdom.
• Is Christian church always marked by peace and harmony where “all the believers were one in heart and mind” (Acts 4:32 – NIV)?

1. Fighting and quarrel are caused by our attitude towards the world.
• The recipients of the Epistle of James fight, quarrel, and are filled with selfish ambitions that drive them into sin (James 4:1).
• “Until our minds are cleansed (that is being turned away from the world), the former doctrine may be iterated a hundred times, but with no effect” (John Calvin).
• The meaning of “the world”:
  - It is not:
    - the planet earth that we live in. Jesus loved the beauty of the world (Mat. 6:28-29).
    - the people inhabiting our planet. God loves the people of the world (John 3:16).
    - the ‘worldly activities’ (going to dances or to cinemas, or being interested in politics and social activities).
    - the life of the world in general such as family relationship, marriage (they are instituted by God), engaging in business or a profession for this thing is essential to life (2 Thes 3:10), government and authorities and powers (they are ordained by God).
  - 1 John 3:1 – “The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”
  - 1 John 3:13 – “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.”
  - 1 John 4:1 – “many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
  - 1 John 5:19 – “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”
• Proposition: The world is a system or order or organization that is alienated from God.
• James 3:15 – “This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”
• Proposition: The world is the earthly wisdom, a philosophy of life and a way of thinking that does not have God in the picture and harbours “bitter jealousy and selfish ambitions in your hearts.”
2. It is the attitude of friendship with the world.
   • James 1:27 – “to keep oneself unstained from the world.” Can anyone of us here claim that he is totally unstained from the world?
   • What does it mean by “friendship with the world”?
   • The word “friendship” is “philia” meaning “love.” So it is affection for the world, an emotional attachment to the world.
   • In addition, “philia,” means love or friendship based on common interests and concerns.
   • “Buying, possessing, accumulating – this is not worldliness. But doing this in the love of it, with no love of God paramount – doing it so that thoughts of eternity and God are an intrusion – doing it so that one’s spirit is secularized in the process; this is worldliness” (anonymous).
   • If we are to live for God in the world, there is a constant issue of commitment and loyalty to be faced: are we his or are we not?

3. The friends of the world are the adulterous people and enemy of God.
   • In the Old Testament, Israel is represented as the wife or the covenant bride of God, and her unfaithfulness is pictured as adultery.
   • The love of the world is a state of spiritual idolatry which constituted attaching themselves to another deity.
   • We cannot be in love with the world and with the Lord at the same time (Mat 6:24).
   • One is either the faithful friend of God or His enemy (Mat 12:30).
   • The word translated “wishes to be,” literally means “to will deliberately, have a purpose, or to intend.”
   • Our verse speaks of our attitude toward God, regarding Him as our enemy (“makes himself an enemy of God”), and not of His toward us.
   • Who are actually the enemies of God?
     – Acts 13:10 – “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness.”
     – Romans 5:10 – “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”
     – Proposition: The enemy of God is an unbeliever.
     – James 2:23 – “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness – and he was called a friend of God.”
     – Proposition: A true believer is a friend of God.

Conclusion
   • James wrote his Epistle to Jewish professing Christians.
   • Those who love the world are not necessarily morally bankrupt:
     – They may have a religiously constructed morality – the rich young ruler (Mat 19:16-22).
     – They may have excellent knowledge of the revelation of the truth – the Jews of the time of our Lord (Mat 23:13-33).
     – They may possess a form of worship but knows no power (2 Tim 3:5).
     – They may feel badly about their sins – Felix (Acts 24:24-27).
     – They may have apparently successful religious enterprises: cast out demons, prophesy, etc (Mat 7:21-22).
• But all of them love their own excellent morality, religious zeal and devoutness, miraculous power and form of godliness rather than Christ.

• The Lord warning, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Mat. 16:26).

• Let us search our hearts, often “judged ourselves truly, that we would not be judged” (1 Cor 11:31), and condemned by the Lord with those awful words, “I never knew you; depart from me” (Mat 7:23).