

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).