

Friendship with the World

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: James 4:4

James warned Christians about “friendship with the world.” He used very strong language, saying that one who “wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Knowing this danger, it is vitally important that we know what this means. In this lesson, we are going to discuss what friendship with the world looks like, and what our relationship with the world ought to be.

Defining Terms

- Friendship – includes familiarity and fondness; from the root word philos, described by Thayer as “one of the bridegroom’s friends who on his behalf asked the hand of the bride and rendered him various services in closing the marriage and celebrating the nuptials” (similar to our concept of a “best man”); this more than an acquaintance, it is a very close relationship
- The world – not the physical creation; instead, this refers to all that stands opposed to God; Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4); James referred to all that is under the control of Satan

What Friendship with the World Looks Like

- Conflict among brethren (v. 1) – the Lord wants His people to be united (John 17:20-21); these conflicts are not about opposing error (2 John 10), this is about strife among brethren; the world will hate us (John 15:18-19); when brethren turn to the world, they will hate us too
- Uncontrolled lust (v. 1-2) – lusts wage war in our members; leads to sin and death (James 1:14-16); this is more than just wishing we had what we desire; this is a complete lack of self-control (“you commit murder”); we are to bring our bodies under subjection (1 Corinthians 9:27); worldliness is contrary to this
- Ignoring God (v. 2) – “you do not ask” in prayer (cf. Philippians 4:6); we may ask for things that are not God’s will, and we will not receive those things (1 John 5:14-15); James warned about the mentality of the Gentiles who did not acknowledge God or give thanks (Romans 1:21, 28)
- Selfishness (v. 3) – our goal becomes simply to satisfy our desires; our “motives” should be to please God and do good to others (Matthew 22:36-40); worldliness follows the lust of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16); it is rooted in selfishness
- Hostility toward God (v. 4) – if we are not with Him, we are against Him (Luke 11:23); the worldly-minded person focuses on worldly things, not spiritual things; this may seem harmless, yet the enemies of God will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:25)

What Our Relationship with the World Should Be

- In the world, but not of the world (John 17:14-15) – Jesus’ disciples are “not of the world,” yet we cannot “go out of the world” (1 Corinthians 5:10); we must continue to work to be different
- Not conformed to the world, but transformed (Romans 12:2) – it is not enough just to be different; be “transformed” and “prove what the will of God is”; Christ must be in us (Galatians 2:20), and this should be evident (1 Peter 4:4)
- Shining as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15-16) – this is done as we hold fast (hold forth, KJV) the word; we let our light shine by our example (Matthew 5:16) and through our teaching (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)
- Not unequally yoked together (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) – do not be influenced by the world; again, we cannot “go out of the world” (1 Corinthians 5:10); but we must be an influence for good (Matthew 5:13) rather than be influenced to do evil
- Strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11-12) – our lives here are temporary (James 4:4); our home is in heaven (Philippians 3:20); therefore, we must obey God and avoid sin; this is how we “eagerly wait” (1 John 2:28-29)

Conclusion

- This world is temporary (1 John 2:17) – if we do the will of God, we can have eternal life
- Do not forfeit this reward for the friendship of the world
- No one is a better friend than the Lord (John 15:13) – let us be a friend to Him (John 15:14)