

• People who badly need to experience God afresh

### 1. James concludes his analysis

• Spiritual adultery getting into a love-relationship with the world and its ways

### 2. James warns them of their danger

• They are already experiencing God's enmity

• How to translate 4 v 5?

• "The Spirit which God made to live in us jealously longs for us"

• Not a quotation but a summary of common Old Testament teaching

James is alarmed that his friends are so 'stained by the world'. He wants to help them. The first thing is: they must realize where they are spiritually. They are quarrelsome, frustrated, prayerless. God has turned away from them. They must realize that although their salvation is not in doubt, they badly need to experience God afresh.

1. **James concludes his analysis of their condition.** He summarises the situation that he has described in verses 1–3. He says to them, 'You adulterers and adulteresses!' <sup>□1</sup>

□1 4:4a

What is 'adultery'? It is when you have a husband or a wife but you turn your attention away from him or her, in order to have a love-relationship with someone else who also has a marriage himself or herself. There is such a thing as **spiritual** adultery. It is when you have had a love-relationship with God. You have trusted Him. You have been grateful to Him for saving you. He has in turn shown you much love. He has showered blessings upon you. He has often answered your prayers. He has been close to you and you have been close to Him. But now you are looking for love elsewhere. James' friends were being unfaithful to their love-relationship with God and they were developing a relationship with the world and its ways. They had allowed worldly discrimination, worldly appetites, worldly greed for money, worldly quarrelsomeness. They were getting into a love-relationship with the world and its ways. God had loved them, and still did! But they were turning elsewhere.

2. **James warns them of their danger.** 'Do you not know that friendship towards the world is enmity with God? Anyone who wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God' <sup>□1</sup>.

□1 4:4

They are already experiencing God's enmity. Their failure in their lives, their quarrelsomeness, their unanswered prayers, the failures in business (see 4:13–14) – all these things came because God was being their enemy. God resists the proud. God becomes the enemy of people who are unfaithful to Him. It is a terrible thing to face the enmity of God!

They are experiencing His jealousy. Verse 5 is difficult to translate. It begins: 'Or do you think that it is for nothing that the scripture says...'. The question is: how should the next bit be translated?

Is it: (i) 'that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely' (New International Version)?

Or (ii) does it mean: 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us' (New Revised Standard Version)?

Or (iii) would it be better translated: 'The Spirit that God made to live in us wants us for himself alone' (New Century Version)?

The first is a possible translation, but James has left behind **analysis** and seems now to **protesting** at what they are doing. The third translation is more likely than the second (for the longing of the Holy Spirit for His people fits well with the flow-of-thought). We may translate it, 'Or do you think that it is for nothing that the scripture says that the Spirit which God made to live in us jealously longs for us' <sup>□1</sup>. It is not referring to any particular text of Scripture (for these exact words are not found in the Old Testament); it rather is a summary of the common Old Testament teaching that God is a jealous God and hates unfaithfulness. We may think of Scriptures like Exodus 20:5, Psalm 91, Jeremiah 3 1:3, Isaiah 43:21, which speak of God's intense desires for His people.

□1 4:5

• *God's jealousy stems from His very intense love for us and causes Him to take action*

God was rebuking these friends of James. He was doing so because of His 'jealousy'. God loves us too much to let us go! He becomes angry when He sees our interest is attracted towards worldly ways and worldly habits. So He starts taking action. It is encouraging but challenging at the same time. It is fearful because when God acts in jealousy we will find it painful. His discipline is tough. We do not enjoy it. Yet at the same time it is all very encouraging because it means that God's Holy Spirit loves us with a very intense love. God is determined to bring us to maturity. He is determined to bring us back to faithfulness towards Himself. The Scriptures mean what they say when they call God a jealous God! If we become friendly towards the world and its ways we shall discover that God will come after us with jealousy. It hurts God when we take our friendship elsewhere but He does not give up on us. He will let things go wrong in our lives, but then He will bring us back to a love- relationship with Him again.

**3. James encouragingly tells them what to do**

• *God continues to deal with them in grace*

• *If they humble themselves all will be well and they will recover*

3. **James encouragingly tells them what to do.** *'But he gives greater grace. So it says "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" <sup>□1</sup>. So humble yourselves submissively to God. Resist the devil, and he will run from you <sup>□2</sup>.* God is a God of grace! He saves us by His grace. We never saved ourselves in the first place. But then God continues to deal with us in grace. Where sin once abounded grace now abounds in our lives. God's grace rules and reigns over us. It was the **graciousness** of God that was working in the lives of these friends of James. Now James has a wonderful word of assurance. God has not given up on them. Although they have been wandering from God for a long time, yet God is still working in them. 'But He gives greater grace!' God has not left them. They have been unfaithful to God but God has not been unfaithful to them. There are some things they have to do. If they continue proudly to defy God they will continue to experience the opposition of God. But if they humble themselves all will be well and they will recover.

□1 4:6  
□2 4:7

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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