

MAJOR THEMES IN THE CHAPTER:

- a. Christians fighting amongst themselves.
- b. The danger of divided affections.
- c. Speaking badly about fellow Christians.
- d. Why we shouldn't be overconfident about the future.

HOW THIS CHAPTER FITS INTO THE LARGER MESSAGE OF THE BOOK:

In chapter 1, James described "pure" religion as caring for orphans and widows and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. In chapter 4, we get a glimpse into what happens when our religion is no longer selfless and free from the contamination of the world. Fights break out because of self-interest and disciples start to speak negatively about each other.

APPLICATIONS:

There is a pandemic of divided affections in modern Christian culture. Satan has done a good job at convincing the Church they can give God part of their heart, while devoting the rest to other affections. As long as he can keep us from devoting our whole heart to God, he has won the battle. Churches whose members are only partially devoted to Jesus will never affect the world in any meaningful way.

Rather than being constant critics of the work, life, and service of other disciples, we need to remember that it is not our place to judge where God has not legislated. God did not intend to make all human beings the same (what a boring world that would be). We think differently, we see value in different things, we approach problems in different ways, and our personalities differ in significant ways. It's easy to start criticizing and gossiping about people who think and live differently than us. But we must heed James' teaching and avoid speaking evil about our brothers and sisters. God has made us unique, and we should celebrate our differences, knowing they will be used to meet unique needs in the Kingdom.

"...whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

- James 4:4 -

James⁴

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

+ THE RESULT OF TRYING TO LOVE THE WORLD AND GOD AT THE SAME TIME (4:1-10):

- James asked the disciples what caused contentions among them.
- He already knew the answer, they were caused by Christians who had divided affections.
- Some disciples were trying to love the world (money, pleasure, honor, etc) as much as they loved God.
- James calls them an "adulterous people."
- Anyone who tries to have "friendship" with the world is the enemy of God.
- God put His Spirit in His disciples to make them new, not to have them return to the things they loved in their past life.
- "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- Disciples are to submit themselves to God as His servants, rather than devoting themselves to selfishly and pridefully pursuing their own passions.
- Pursuing your own passions is a submission to Satan's will for your life.
- If we resist the devil, he will "flee" from us.
- If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us.
- James wanted the Christians to repent, cleanse their hearts of selfishness, and be single-minded.
- "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

+ SPEAKING EVIL ABOUT OTHER CHRISTIANS (4:11-12):

- In close connection with the previous points, James condemned the action of slandering other disciples.
- He said, whoever speaks evil of another disciple, speaks evil of God's law.
- Christians should not be in the business of judging other Christians based on their opinions.
- Christians should be "doers" (practitioners) of God's law, rather than illegitimate judges.

+ BE CAREFUL NOT TO PRESUME THE FUTURE (4:13-17):

- Disciples should be careful not to assume what the future holds for them.
- We are not guaranteed tomorrow.
- Only God knows whether we will live another day or if this will be our last.
- Christians should view themselves as a vapor which quickly vanishes.
- Instead of assuming we will be alive tomorrow, we should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."
- Presuming is arrogant.
- "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."