

November 8, 2020
The Bridge Bible Fellowship
Pastor Paul S. Brown
James 4:1-10

“Be a True Friend of God!” – Part 3

IX. Be a true friend of God (4:1-10) – ARE YOU A TRUE FRIEND OF GOD?

A. The Earthly Problem (1-5)

1. Q & A #1 (1-3) – Battle within Yourself
2. Q & A #2 (4) – Battle with God
3. Q & A #3 (5) – Battle with the Spirit

“Or do you think (suppose) that the Scripture speaks to no purpose?”

- What does “the Scripture” refer to? (Jn. 19:37; Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal. 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18; Ex. 20:5; Gen. 6:3-5; Is. 63:8-16; Prov. 3:34)

“He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

- One of the most difficult verses in the NT to translate and interpret.
 - Does this refer to the Holy Spirit or man’s human spirit?
 - Is “spirit” the subject or the object of the sentence?
 - Is it God or is it man who jealously desires?
- God’s jealousy (Ex. 20:4-6; Dt. 4:24)
- Man’s jealousy (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:19-21; James 3:14-16)

Four possible grammatical structures (D. Edmond Hiebert):

1. The human spirit as the object of the main verb: “He [God] yearns enviously for the spirit which He caused to dwell in us.”
2. The divine Spirit as the object of the verb: “He [God] yearns enviously for the Spirit which He caused to dwell in us.”
3. The human spirit as the subject of the main verb: “The spirit which He made to dwell in us longs enviously.”
4. The divine Spirit as the subject of the verb: “The Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearns enviously.”

- Striving against the Holy Spirit (Gen. 6:3; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 8; 1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 6:18-20)
- Pastor Paul’s paraphrase: “The Holy Spirit whom God gave to us in the New Covenant, is moved with deep emotions as he longs with intense jealousy for us to be 100% devoted to God.”
 - See James 3:17; Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22

So what?

Discussion & Application:

1. Describe for others the qualities you love the most in the best friend you ever had. What made them a true friend?
2. Describe what your lifestyle would be like if God truly was your best friend. What character qualities would you display toward Him? How much time would you spend with Him? What would you do for Him? What would you enjoy most about Him?
3. Share some victories you have experienced over the past few weeks in saying no to selfish pleasures and/or choosing not to commit spiritual adultery (James 4:1-4).
4. James 4:5 begins with what appears to be a rhetorical question: **“Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose?”** Why would someone ever suppose that the Scripture speaks to no purpose (in vain; for no reason; to no end)? Have you ever elevated your subjective opinion on a subject to a place above God’s stated opinion in Scripture? Why did you do that? Find and share Bible verses that tell us why we should submit to the Word of God instead of our own personal opinions or desires. (See Psalms 119; Mt. 5:17-20; John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:16-21 to get started)
5. Why is the last half of James 4:5 so difficult to translate and/or interpret? Of the four grammatical possibilities on the outline, which one do you think best matches the context? Why?
6. Pastor Paul believes the fourth possibility is best. If that is true, what other passages of Scripture would say the same thing or something similar about the Holy Spirit in your life?
7. The Holy Spirit is a Person with real emotions. Commentator Douglas Moo writes, **“What God requires of us is a total, unreserved, unwavering allegiance to Him, rather than to the world.”** How does the Holy Spirit respond when we live that way? How does He respond when we don’t live that way? Do you sense His pleasure and/or His jealousy? Is He pleased with your devotion to Jesus right now?
8. What are some ways a person can grow in their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and His leading in their life? What specific spiritual disciplines help?
9. Bonus questions in preparation for next week: Note the first two words of James 4:6: **“But He...”** Why are these words so important to James, to his first century readers, and to us? What other passages of Scripture present a “But God” solution to man’s deepest problems / needs? How do those verses help you better understand God’s amazing **grace**?
10. Write down privately (or share with others) a few specific things in your life that are hindering you from being a true friend of God (areas of sinful compromise with the world that are making the Holy Spirit jealous). Ask the Lord to help you see those things from His perspective (His Word does NOT speak to no purpose). Commit to turn from those things and replace them with things that will bring God great joy.
11. If you haven’t already done so, **memorize James 4:1-10**. Recite it in the morning and at lunchtime. In the evening, go back over James chapters 1-3 to retain what you have already memorized.