

Safety in a Submissive Spirit  
James 4:4-7

May 5, 2013

A. Introduction

1. How do you handle danger?
2. Christians live in danger

B. The two camps 4:4

1. **You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**
2. the universe: a battlefield – God vs Satan
3. Christian turncoats – turning to love the world<sup>A</sup>

C. God's Love in His Spirit 4:5

1. **Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'? margin: 'The Spirit which He has made to dwell in us jealously desires us.'**
2. remember the context (spiritual adultery)<sup>B</sup>
3. a difficult verse (reasons; a reasonable meaning)<sup>C</sup>

D. The Remedy of Grace 4:6

1. **But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'**
2. God knows us (and therefore knows our needs)<sup>D</sup>
3. God gives grace (to meet those varied needs)<sup>E</sup>

E. The Way to Safety – Submit 4:7

1. **Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**
2. submit (different from obey, but includes it)
3. God is overwhelmingly superior (therefore ...)

F. Conclusion

1. too near the world
2. but God has an answer<sup>F</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> Philemon 1:24, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:19

<sup>B</sup> Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>C</sup> Exodus 20:3-5, 34:14

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<sup>D</sup> Psalms 103:14, John 2:25

<sup>E</sup> Titus 2:11-12, 1 Peter 5:6

<sup>F</sup> Romans 5:5, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Galatians 5:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9

A. Introduction

1. How Do You Handle Danger?

a. here is a parable for you:

- (A) A hunter raised his rifle and took aim at a large bear. Just as he was ready to pull the trigger, he was shocked to hear the bear begin to talk. The bear spoke in a soft, soothing voice, "Isn't it better to talk than to shoot? What do you want? Let's see if we can negotiate."
- (B) The hunter lowered his rifle, and replied, "I want a fur coat." "Good," said the bear, "that is negotiable. I only want a full stomach, so let us sit down and work out a compromise."
- (C) They sat down to talk and after a time the bear got up and walked away. He was alone. The negotiations had been successful.
- (D) The bear's stomach was indeed full, and the hunter had his fur coat!—{2}.

b. you should never negotiate yourself out of a position of strength into one of weakness

2. Christians Live in Danger

- a. we live in the world
- b. a world in rebellion against its Creator-God
- c. a world whose god and ruler is Satan
- d. and listening to his soft, soothing voice – the allures and pleasures of this world – can reduce us from a position of strength and victory to one of weakness and defeat

B. The Two Camps . . . . . 4:4

1. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

2. This Universe Is a Battle-field

- a. there has been a war raging from the dawn of creation
- b. on the one hand, there is God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them

- (A) this physical universe, with all of its beauty, and of which man is learning increasingly more, through the exercise of his intellect and other God-given senses
- (B) the spiritual universe, of which we can get a glimpse through the pages of God's revealing word
- c. on the other hand, there is Satan, that old serpent, the deceiver and the accuser of the people of God
  - (A) who rebelled against God and enticed mankind in the persons of Adam and Eve into that rebellion – a rebellion called sin
  - (B) and usurped the rule of this world for a period of time
- d. in my view, one of the purposes of the book of Revelation is to give us a panoramic picture of this war as it is even now taking place in the unseen, invisible, spiritual world
  - (A) because, although the war may not be seen by our physical eyes, it is even now taking place in the lives and hearts of mankind
  - (B) the Bible refers to the forces that are on Satan's side
    - (1) to the values and loyalties they hold
    - (2) with the term, 'the world' or 'this world'
- e. everyone, like it or not, is in either of two armies: God's or Satan's

### 3. Christian Turncoats

- a. if loyalty to England had been the cause of his going over to the British his action could have been accepted, and even admired
  - (A) but the records and his subsequent dealings show that it was only a mercenary choice, whatever profited his merchant heart
  - (B) even the British never trusted, and only tolerated, him
  - (C) so his name is synonymous with traitorous treachery
- b. the Bible also records men of similar nature
  - (A) in a personal, little letter from Paul to Philemon, he speaks lists a name along with Mark, Aristarchus and Luke as a fellow-worker
  - (B) later, in writing the the Colossian church from prison, he again mentions that name with greetings from him and doctor Luke
  - (C) but in 2 Timothy 4:10, we find the last, sad record: [`for Demas, having loved this present world,](#)

has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; ...'

- (D) the name, Demas, has become a byword for such as would desert Jesus Christ, and God's army, for the camp of the enemy

C. God's Love in His Spirit . . . . . 4:5

- 1. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?', or, NAS margin: 'The Spirit which He has made to dwell in us jealously desires us.'

2. Remember the Context

- a. besides the picture of the battlefield in verse 4, there was another
- b. that was the picture of spiritual adultery
- c. deserting the camp of Christ for the camp of Satan – or trying to keep your feet in both camps – is not only treachery but also infidelity
- d. God doesn't merely take a human institution – marriage – and say to Himself, 'Oh, that's a good picture of my relationship to Israel or my relationship to the church.'
  - (A) marriage was created by God, and in its origin it was to be a one with one, satisfying relationship
  - (B) it was God who spoke these instructions in Genesis 2:24, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.' according to Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6, adding, 'consequently they are no more two, but one flesh.' – there is no room in that statement for a third
- e. that is the relationship that God would have with His people
- f. now let us consider

3. This is a difficult verse

- a. in the course of my study, as well as looking at the original Greek or Hebrew, I usually look at half-a-dozen or more translations
  - (A) for this verse they are all different, sometimes markedly so, and sometimes with marginal alternatives also quite different
  - (B) it is the last part of the verse on which they differ

- (C) the AV, following the Latin Vulgate, translates it ‘...the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?’ – spirit with a small ess.
  - (D) the NEB has ‘...the spirit which God implanted in man turns towards envious desires.’ – small ess.
  - (E) the NIV ‘the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?’ – small ess, while the margin has ‘God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us,’ – small ess – or, ‘the Spirit he caused live in us longs jealously’ – capital ess
- b. why such wide differences? ... such confusion?
- (A) first, the Greek as originally written, did not distinguish references to God as we do by the use of capitals – it was all in capital letters – so that does not tell us whether it is speaking of man’s natural spirit, of his new spirit through re-birth or the Holy Spirit
  - (B) second, there is no single OT Scripture that can be found for this quotation: it is rather an amalgam of OT scriptural truth
  - (C) thirdly, it is not clear whether it is the spirit that is doing the desiring, or if the spirit is the object of that desire
  - (D) fourthly, although this word translated ‘desires’ elsewhere is used in a positive sense – e.g. Paul’s intense desire to see Timothy – some translations would use it here in a negative sense
  - (E) finally, the word translated ‘jealously’ or ‘envy’ can also be either positive or negative in its intention; and in the Bible it is used in a positive sense, as God applies it to himself in the ten ‘words’ of Exodus 20 which summarize His covenant relationship with Israel: ‘You shall have no other gods before Me. ... You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, ...’ (Exodus 20:3, 5) – God is too pure and holy, that just like a loving husband, He will not tolerate the seduction of His wife from him: His name is Jealous (Exodus 34:14)
- c. with these considerations, along with the context, you can perhaps see why I view the NAS margin to most closely convey the meaning of this verse: God in His wisdom has put His Holy Spirit in us, who in turn will jealously desire us – woo us as the old-time Methodist preachers would say – whenever we find the attractions of the world too great
- d. but as in that situation, God gives the Spirit, so He also gives ...

1. But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'

2. God Knows Us

- a. as Creator He knows us – 'For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.' (Psalms 103:14)
- b. as God the Son He knows us, for He walked among us and lives with us – it is recorded, 'He knew what was in man.' (John 2:25)
- c. and as the Holy Spirit, indwelling us, He knows us
- d. and so God knows our weaknesses and our deepest needs; and so

3. God Gives Grace

- a. grace is not just that attribute of God which when imparted to us brings salvation to us, and instructs us, (Titus 2:11-12)
- b. but it is that attribute of God which He shares with us, drawing us to Himself in deeper fellowship, and dimming in our eyes the dazzling allure of this world – a grace to be received not because of our works and accomplishments, but because of His own gracious nature
- c. 'Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.' (1 Peter 5:6)

E. The Way to Safety – Submit . . . . . 4:7

1. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

2. Submit

- a. Lord willing, we shall return to this verse next week, when we consider verses 7 to 10, under the title 'Step Down to Get Up'
  - (A) when we shall see seven imperatives to the Christian
  - (B) but for a moment, I just want to look at the first command: submit
- b. 'to submit' is different from 'to obey' – let me illustrate

- (A) if I were to suggest strongly that you do something, and in reality were giving you an order
- (B) you might obey for a number of reasons
  - (1) perhaps what I say might make some sense
  - (2) perhaps it agrees with what you wanted to do anyway
  - (3) perhaps it is because of some expertise that you think I have
  - (4) or, perhaps it is in deference to my age, stature, or whatever
  - (5) but while these are sufficient reason for you to obey, they are inadequate in causing you to submit
- (C) you submit to another in recognising the other's superiority
- (D) and out of submission comes the natural result of obedience

### 3. God Is Overwhelmingly Superior

#### a. using any scale you can conceive

- (A) and measured in any direction you may choose:
- (B) His Power; His Holiness; His Justice; His Love; His Kindness –
- (C) God bursts the thermometers of our conceptions of any of these

#### b. so the only rational choice; the only spiritually realistic choice

- (A) is that we should surrender our will to Him – that is, submit
- (B) if we are to escape Satan and his snares
- (C) if we are to be in this world and yet not of it

## F. Conclusion

### 1. Too Near the World

- a. William Wordsworth wrote these words from a much different point of view than James and yet they pounce on the same problem

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!—{3}.

- b. the ever-presentness of the world is a danger we all face
- c. it endangers our relationship to our Lord and Saviour – how can we walk in His ways with Him when our steps are in the world?
- d. it endangers our testimony – how can we witness to the new life in Christ when we busy ourselves in the old life in the world?

## 2. But God Has an Answer

- a. He has placed the Holy Spirit in our hearts as an evidence and seal of the Triune God's love for us: *'and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'* (Romans 5:5)
  - (A) that is God's sovereign act to give the benefits of our salvation
  - (B) yet there is a responsibility on our part before some of those benefits flow out in our daily living – listen
  - (C) *'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.'* (Ephesians 4:30)
  - (D) *'Do not quench the Spirit;'* (1 Thessalonians 5:19)
  - (E) *'But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.'* (Galatians 5:16)
- b. can you and I count on this last promise?
  - (A) we certainly can!
  - (B) it is written in the cheque-book of God's grace
  - (C) perhaps it was the words of this passage in James that led Annie Johnson Flint to pen these words,  
*He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater  
He sendeth more strength as our labours increase  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials He multiplies peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half-done  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources*



Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.—<sup>{4}</sup>.

- (D) small wonder, then, it is that Paul under many trials and much weakness could make this statement: 'And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.' (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- (E) that is the power that can overcome the world

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Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard version, used by permission. Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon.

Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in *(braces)*. Version identifiers are:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
- EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
- Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament, *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
- TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com).

A couple of sermons to be considered

- Kerux sermon #2385 – Geoff Thomas – The Love of the Holy Spirit
  - 1 The Impossibility of Being a Friend of the World and of God.
  2. Love of the World Makes us an Adulterous People
  3. The Love of the Holy Spirit Means that He Longs Jealously For Us. (v.5)
  4. God Opposes the Proud, but Gives Grace to the Humble. (v.6).

Kerux sermon #25458 – Don Horban – Knowing Where Our Biggest Problems Really Come From – 4:1-6

2. *'Never Negotiate With the Devil,'* Dynamic Preaching, Oct 3, 2003 – Kerux illustrations #16485
3. *'The World Is Too Much with Us,'* 1807, by William Wordsworth, lines 1-4
4. *'He Giveth More Grace,'* by Annie Johnson Flint (1856-1932)