

Session 5

October 2, 2022

FAITH ON DISPLAY IN FACING THE ENEMY

James 4:1-10

Romans 3:23 states, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Even some Baptists suggest that humans are born perfectly pure, and only later choose to sin. “Of course, all will sin,” one preacher told me, “Because all *choose* to sin.” Really? Then why don’t people choose *not* to sin? So, which is it? Are we sinners because we sin? Or do we sin because we are sinners?

In this week’s text, James discusses the sources of temptation and sin that we all face.

The flesh (vv. 1-3). Have you ever noticed that Cain, Adam’s son, didn’t need the devil to prompt him to rebel against God and kill his brother? That’s because once Adam and Eve sinned, they passed the sin nature to their children. There was no mention of the serpent or deception in Genesis 4, because he wasn’t needed! Cain and Abel were born with a corrupt sin nature already within them. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Here, James reminds us that just because we are saved and have a new nature, doesn’t mean the old sin nature is gone. In fact, the Bible tells us that the old flesh is at war with the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-17), and that we must continually and willfully *mortify* (put to death) the sinful elements that remain in us (Col. 3:5). The strife that James addresses here is both base and brutal. Look at the terms he uses: *wars, fights, cravings, desire, wrong motives, evil desires*. And these selfish conflicts were all within the church! For reflection: *As you review the conflicts mentioned in verses 1-3, what do you think is the root problem? How could these things exist in born again people?*

The world (vv. 4-5). The term “world” in verse 4 is *cosmos*. It’s not a reference to planet Earth, but rather to the *manner* and *order* displayed by the earth’s inhabitants. The term is also related to “trappings” or “decorations,” which adds to the connotation of the world’s *allure*. Perhaps no passage of Scripture more succinctly states the cosmic battle of the powers of darkness (the world) and the kingdom of light (God). There is no middle ground here! Friendship with the world is hostility with God. To befriend the world is to make God your enemy (v. 4). For the bride of Christ to longingly embrace the world is, in God’s sight, nothing short of *adultery!* (v. 4). Verse 5 is awkward in its wording, but not in meaning. Whether the spirit who lives in us refers to the old human nature, or the Holy Spirit who indwells us, the meaning is the same. The two simply cannot, do not, and will not get along! (see Gal. 5:17). For reflection: *Read 1 John 2:15-17. What similarities do you find with our focal passage? What does John’s insight add to the study?*

The devil (vv. 6-10). The third enemy we face is the devil. While I don’t see a demon behind every bush (our *flesh* and the *world* provide enough temptation!), I do believe Christ-followers are under continual attack by the forces of evil (remember 1 Pet. 5:8). The key word in these verses is *humility*. How do we resist the devil? By *humbling ourselves*. How do we draw nearer to God? By *humbling ourselves*. How do we do that? By *cleansing our hands* (of sinful actions), *purifying our hearts* (of sinful attitudes) (v. 8), *demonstrating misery and sorrow*, and *mourning* our corrupt and sinful position before a holy God (v. 9). Notice the irony in verse 10: when we

humble ourselves before God, He gives us the genuine recognition found in His favor. What the flesh, the world, and the devil can only promise, God delivers! For reflection: *Most people believe the way to battle the flesh is by more willpower, and the way to defeat the devil is to run from him. What does this passage from James do to that argument?*