

Guarding Against Spiritual Adultery: Faithfulness to the Lord in a Sinful World

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[0:00] I want to talk about the subject of spiritual adultery. Faithfulness to the Lord in a world that cares little for the Saviour. And we see that in James 4 verse 4, it reads, Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

The word enmity means it's hateful. It's hating of God, hateful to God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Very strong words here. Adultery. Now we know adultery in the physical sense is one of the most devastating breaches of trust in a relationship.

I can't fathom what that would be like. But it is a reality and it happens. And the Bible here talks about an adultery that is a friendship with the world.

And that this is something that's repulsive and hateful to God. It's contrary. It's against God. And so we're going to unpack that kind of theme a little.

[1:18] And we see that the Bible talks about this unfaithfulness which is a spiritual kind of adultery. And it occurs when you think of it as we, as the church, as the bride of Christ, we turn our hearts away from him.

And we pursue other loves. And this is not merely an Old Testament concept. It's actually through the scriptures we see this kind of adultery of sorts.

A spiritual kind of unfaithfulness to God. Where we see, and it's a repeated pattern through the scriptures of God's people turning to worldly desires, to idols, to sinful behaviours.

A choosing of other loves rather than the love of the Creator. Loving the things of this world more than our precious Lord. And in the Old Testament we see Israel was described as an unfaithful spouse.

Now I can't imagine having a spouse that is unfaithful. But yet we see the church effectively, the people of God, rebuked here for an unfaithful adultery.

[2:34] And we see in the New Testament the church is called or likened to a bride unto Christ. 2 Corinthians 11.2 And this truth of this worldly compromise that is a kind of divided loyalty, isn't it?

Our love should be for our Lord and our Saviour as a faithful spouse. But the world has got its allurements and its seducing. And when we think about it, any compromise with the world is a betrayal.

It's grievous, isn't it, to our Lord to think it's as repulsive as an unfaithfulness in a marriage. And friends, tonight, God is a jealous God. He's jealous.

There's this sense where He wants our unreserved love, doesn't He? He loves us so that He wants that for us. And He's got that rightful claim over us as His creation.

And, you know, we can experience a jealousy. I know as a younger man there was a bit of jealousy in me when there was others vying for affection. But we see that God has got a jealousy because His rightful love is for us.

[3:49] And He wants that to be unreserved. How does spiritual adultery happen? We think about, really, this truth that is in this verse here, the friendship of the world.

We've got to be careful about worldly friendship. Now, of course, our Lord is called the friend of sinners. He was one who could meet gladly with sinners and minister to them.

But there's this sense where there's a separation as well from worldly affections. There's a truth of separation.

And we see the Bible talks about affections. It tells us, for example, a couple of verses here. It tells you, set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth in Colossians there. And it tells you that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Galatians 5.24 So worldly affections have got this kind of pull on us, this magnetic allurements, this seducing, this attracting.

[4:57] And it's very easy in this world that we live. And we know it. Like in workplaces, you're often tested. I've been subject to a lot of testing of late that I won't elaborate on publicly here tonight.

But we see that the world's values and priorities are warped. The world's ways and desires are godless and contrary to God. And we've got to make a stand as the people of God.

These things can certainly draw us away from God. Because we're living in a world where the worldview is contrary to the biblical worldview. We see we're living in a world where there's affections and lusts that we need to deny and crucify.

There's things that can become like an idol. In Colossians 3.5 it talks about covetousness. It's like idolatry. Colossians 3.5 So in a way you could think really anything that takes the place of our Lord in our hearts, whether it be money, power, relationships, or even ourselves, can become like an idol for us.

And it's easy to be drawn away from our Lord. These are things that are repeated themes right through the scriptures from cover to cover. We see this repeated truth and these examples time and time again through the people in the pages of scripture that we see these things.

[6:25] And there's a warning given to the church as we see as Christ rebukes the church in Ephesus, Revelation 2 verse 4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.

It's been said that anything that calls my affection for my Lord is the world. And I must avoid that, reject that. Think of it, when our devotion to our Lord grows cold, we can be vulnerable to unfaithfulness.

You think of it in a marriage too. That can happen, can't it? God helped me from making that mistake. That I would be a faithful spouse and that my spouse would know my absolute devotion to her.

Think of it in the spiritual context here. Can we have that love for our Lord, that he's our first, our absolute love. But yet we're living in this world where the grip of the world is strong and the influence of the world, it's all pervasive.

Babylon, it's all around us, isn't it? We're living in really effectively a modern type of Babylon. Where are the Daniels who will rise up? We talked about Daniel lately. There's so much to be desired and even in Christendom itself.

[7:43] And I've had occasion where, and it's happened of late, people have asked me, they're looking for a church that I would recommend in Adelaide, in other parts of our city.

And honestly, there's very few. And this is not to big note ourselves. We've got much to be desired in this church. But it's just to state the plain reality that there's very few churches you could really recommend.

The sad reality. Many churches are so compromised. I was looking for a friend, as I say, could not find one nearby to him that I could wholeheartedly recommend.

People with ministry that is not biblical, like women pastors, it's really not Bible. You can't recommend that.

All manner of Bible versions where it's like a plethora of a Bible, of the Bibles. And many of them quite paraphrased, even.

[8:45] Carnal methods. Compromised connections. Ecumenical alliances. Confusion. A lack of discernment in matters of music. In all matters. A complete lack of biblical foundation and sound doctrine.

Confusionment. And I'd have to say, well, there's this one near you, but maybe there's this that I would not endorse. And it's difficult, isn't it?

You want to have a church where you could recommend, hey, there's a church near you that is okay. But there's so much lacking.

And that's a sad reality. There's kind of spiritual adultery as well. Well, it's not just things like that, but even the heart of the people is careless. They've got, at times, an unsaved membership. Numbers of them that the people, they're not getting the gospel. Even the simple gospel at the services they attend. They're careless about the things of God.

[9:44] Worldliness prevails. The will of God is like it doesn't matter. What is pleasing unto our God, that doesn't really feature in people's thinking. And there's this unfaithfulness.

It's like the relationship with God doesn't count as important. And when you think of it, of adultery, you think of adultery, the gross reality of actual adultery, is that it happens incrementally. It happens bit by bit, incrementally. A seducing happens. And it's bit by bit. Where some attraction happens.

And it might just start with a glance. With a look. And then it incrementally gets worse and worse. Seducing. The Bible talks about seducing. We'll talk about that in brief. And so the point I'm making is that this adultery, this unfaithfulness to, as in a spouse to a spouse, and as the bride of Christ to our Lord, it can happen really incrementally, bit by bit.

[10:57] Before we know it, it's really bad. And we didn't realise how it was going. Seems like people can slip into bad habits easier than good ones, isn't it? This Laodicean age.

People are compromising. Worldly movies and entertainment. Oh, it's just a little bit questionable. But we accommodate and accommodate bit by bit.

And then before we know it, we just, there's nothing differentiating us from the world. And there's a loss of conviction, a decline. The love of the world.

The love of the world is, it's very subtle and seducing. Worldly music. Worldly associations. Worldly events.

Worldly loves. Worldly activities. Not necessarily wrong, even. But it can become a substitute. Our time gets consumed with that.

[11:56] Before we know it, where's the time for God? And the things of God. The Bible is clear, touch not. The unclean thing. We see that there in 2 Corinthians, talking about separation.

That God says, I will dwell in them and walk in them. I will be their God. They shall be my people. And he says, wherefore come out from among them, the world, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Touch not. Don't even touch it. The unclean thing. And I will receive you. And I will be a father unto you. You shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. God's interested in relationship.

And so he says, don't even touch it. If there's question, don't touch it. Even if it's just a little unclean, don't touch it. Our time can get consumed with that.

That is doubtful to the neglect of our soul. And the Bible is clear. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I know people have said to me, that would be a good Bible text to put on top of your TV set, if you've got one.

[12:55] I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. And so you're ready with your thumb over the off button. As a wicked thing, change channel.

Or better yet, turn it off. Now there's that thought, well, what am I going to set as my standard? Is it a biblical one? It's easy to fall into this trap of the seducing, this spiritual adultery.

And when we take the path of compromise, we skip church for some worldly thing, there's the stuff that takes his place. And before we know it, we become carnal. We become carnal.

And it's a reproach. Friends, I'm talking honestly. We can grow carnal. We don't even realise that we're carnal. Will we honour our Lord or not? When we don't, then how can God bless that?

And I'm speaking to myself. I'm failing in many respects. Where are the people who carry the burden of the Lord? The Word of God talks about a good burden.

[13:55] The burden of the Lord, that's a good burden to have. A burden for souls. And God's got a way of stirring up our spirit. I've come across these verses where there was a call to consecration.

It was the time of the setting up of the tabernacle in Exodus 35, 21. It says, It says, It says their hearts got stirred up.

The spirit was made willing. That's a good place to be, isn't it? And when we get something, Oh, that's a bit confronting. We can have that right reaction. Yeah, my spirit's stirred up. I'm made willing. I'll bring the offering. I'll get things sorted. but others can have a different reaction here's a different reaction where we see a man it says he also rebelled against king nebuchadnezzar who made him swear by god but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the lord god of israel we can hear a message that speaks to us and stirs up a bit of reaction and we can have a stiffening of the neck and a hardening a hardening of the heart it's not a good place to be is it so rather than being stiff-necked let us yield here's how it reads of this one and really the record is clear you either go the way of the lord or the way of the flesh you'll have your spirit stirred up you'll be made willing or you'll stiffen your neck and you'll harden your heart and here we see it tells yield yield yourselves unto the lord sometimes we can get stiff-necked when we hear a confronting message when we hear a provocative sermon we can get stiff-necked or we can yield ourselves unto the lord i know that i have had times when i've been very stiff-necked the bible is clear learn not the way of the heathen it's interesting how a feature of the world is images and i've got lots of screens i've got a screen in my pocket images aren't they images and of course we know the bible talks about images makes me think of screens of different kinds and we've got to be careful about images don't we the worldly wise people would think that learning the ways of the godless is a cool thing to do and that sometimes when people say just go with the flow go along to get along don't make waves don't be an out and out christian you won't be popular if you do that you might lose your job people will laugh at you exclude you it's been truly said that only dead fish go with the flow and so there's that sense where actually i'm going to be watching that screen and making sure i'm careful about the images and guard against that seduction seducing spirits learn not the way of the heathen and there's lots of bible verses that talk about seduction again on this theme of spiritual adultery for example it says in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils it talks about evil men and seducers are going to wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived and then john writes one john two these things have i written unto you concerning them that seduce you spiritual seduction it's a real it's a real thing seduction will we backslide or will we grow what matters is will we be found in his will or not in his will does the will of god matter to us we can zone out or we can tune in and think yeah actually i've got to be careful of that the bible is very clear about that how do we protect our heart from spiritual adultery could i be subject to it could i make that mistake could i become a spiritual adulterer how do i protect myself from that see this verse here tells us delight thyself also in the lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart commit thy way unto the lord trust also in him he shall bring it to pass do we delight ourselves in the lord is he our delight if we want the our heart's desires to to come about we've got to get the delight right first all right get the delight right and then the desires will be right our heart will be right and we could all think about what can i do to serve we can be choosy about what we will do for god could it be that the ministry of suffering could be the ministry for us could it be the fellowship of his sufferings maybe that's what god's caught us to not many people will queue up in the line for that one may we beware lest we fall into spiritual adultery and let's get that heart right it's like a spouse that's that's committed unto their spouse they delight in their spouse and the desires are unto their spouse the desires are right you look at the history of the kings i've been spending some time through some of the readings of the history of the kings and there's this interesting cycle and it's kind of it speaks to us today you think and i know having worked in government there's a change of government everything gets thrown out the door they change all the names of everything there's a new head a new mission a new plan everything gets changed you see that in the moment in the usa obviously there's a radical change there there's a change of government everything gets shifted and changed you see in the old testament where you see the kings and one king is is full on doing that which is right in the eyes of the lord and then their son goes and does that which is evil in the sight of the lord some kings followed the example of their father followed in their footsteps others not so some started off not so well but then they finished strong some started off walking in a good and godly way but then they did not finish well some did what was right in their own eyes some did what was right in the eyes of the lord some did what was evil and it makes you think well we all need accountability we we are subject to the same fallible ways as the kings of the bible we can follow in our father's footsteps in the wrong way in the wrong direction or we can choose that which is right in the eyes of the lord and we're all accountable aren't we we've all got to answer to the lord to godly authority we see that it was when the authority was

wrong there was a lot of trouble when there was no king in israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes the bible talks about the way of a fool is right in his own eyes but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise and then we see trust in the lord need not unto a line own understanding in all the ways acknowledge him he shall direct thy paths be not wise in thine own eyes fear the lord and depart from evil it shall be held to thy navel and marrow to thy bones there's this sense where don't lean on your own understanding find what god's will is we think of if we want to avoid spiritual adultery it's about being close to our lord isn't it like a spouse would be close to their spouse that will protect them from adultery what about spiritual adultery are we close to our lord are we trusting in the lord with all our heart are we doing what's right in his eyes or are we doing right what's in our own eyes and when you think about it spiritual adultery is everywhere there's churches where christ is demeaned i've seen some horrific examples lately of just shocking things really woke stuff in some churches and in some churches there's this inflation of a man a magnifying of a man that can be a problem too you might have a strong pastor but they actually get right off track that they become a diatrophies the bible talks about that a man who loves to have the preeminence we've got a guard against that too i've got a guard against that in many quarters we see this elevation of a man where they don't have any accountability

[22:56] and when we see how faulty they are it's a poor reflection of christ that's a really woeful thing isn't it and why does that happen it's when we get our focus off the lord put it on man rather keep the spotlight on our lord that christ be preeminent you could say there's much spiritual abuse where there's some churches they're run by a man without accountability and god helping me i won't be such a man but in some churches they magnify a man such that you cannot question what he says and he will exert a dogmatic dictatorial rule and overlording leaders must be held accountable we all have to and there's so much that is cultic out there i've seen some examples of this and there's many of them men running roughshod abusing their wife self-censored narcissistic abusing their children yet still standing in a pulpit losing their testimony bringing reproach reproach on the name of christ we must not follow such men spiritual adultery can happen in any church i want to guard against that for myself spiritual adultery rather that we'd be willing to suffer for christ even for righteousness sake to have the right spirit friends and so to avoid spiritual adultery we've got to keep the heart right the heart right and be willing to even be persecuted for christ's sake that we stand for what's right and not accommodate what's wrong but by the same token if you bear with me as an example we've also got the principle of soul liberty soul liberty and and there's that reality that for all of us for this church we all have an accommodation of different views views to some degree there are some things that i have a problem with for example there's different views along the continuum for example there's some and just as an example of this what we do with christmas for some santas and sleigh bells are okay and elves some might say well not that but we'll have a nativity display we'll have something more reverential and some would say well actually we don't want any part of it and some will accommodate christmas trees and elves we've all got to make our own mind up about such things some will have nothing to do with the concept people will draw the line where they see fit with their own conscience and that is absolutely fine so i just want to be clear about that some people are asking me about that we allow for people to have different convictions on some of these things they're kind of as an aside kind of issue but do what is right in your heart before the lord do what is right before him what you feel is the right thing the right spirit and so there's a need for exercising discernment actually we won't go quite that far or we won't go quite that far we'll come to our own mind on that to exercise discernment let the word be your guide on all these things as to what is fitting and what is not and may we be hard on ourselves not on others not judging others for their liberty if that's

their decision because we don't want to have cultic decisions from some dominating overlord style preacher that can be a problem it's that spiritual adultery where this confusion comes in people don't know what's right what's wrong there's this mishmash and we don't want a church where the leader says you have to but the folk and the fellowship would rather say i want to i want to do something for god i want to be faithful i want to grow my faith i want to take opportunity i want to do the spiritual thing

i want to glorify my lord and the time will come as we get older in life and we look back at the decisions that we made hopefully we won't have that regret oh i should have done this i will say i made a wise decision there i chose not to go away from my lord or to take a path that's doubtful i wanted to have a faithfulness to my lord and to not be a stumbling block so we've all got decisions to make about really it's our relationship with the lord that's the point i suppose i'm trying to underline that point it's our relationship with the lord with all of life's choices that we make god honoring decisions that as a spouse should have to their spouse they want to care about what their spouse wants and as the bride of christ as it were that we want to care about what does our lord want and make that our first consideration make god honoring decisions with our lives and i came across this kind of decision making filter for the bible believer as to how do we how do we decide what's the right thing and what's the wrong thing we can use seven measures seven factors so firstly we can ask the question number one is it biblical does the decision i'm thinking about line up with god's word all scripture is given by inspiration of god it's profitable the doctrine for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness what does the bible say that should be really the main starting point shouldn't it about the matter is it in accord with biblical principles is it biblical number two does it glorify god will this action reflect positively on the name of my lord whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do do all to the glory of god does it glorify god this decision does it bring him glory does it point others to the savior does it glorify him thirdly does it reflect faith and trust in god again trust in the lord with all thine heart does it reflect living according to god's will god's guidance or are we just acting out of our own flesh have we prayed about it and sought the lord's wisdom i'm sometimes inclined to make rash decisions rather let's take time to get the mind of god to be controlled by faith not our own will number four when we're considering a decision does it promote love and edification let all your things be done with charity romans 14 19 follow after the things which make for peace things wherewith one may edify another will my decision bless others will it cause hurt does it reflect the fruit of the spirit or is it the flesh does it build up others good consideration isn't it another consideration is it eternal minded set your effects on things above on eternal things not just temporary gratification sometimes we can do things without thought of the eternal ramifications will this matter in eternity is it something that's right that we'll look back in eternity and think that was a wise decision have i sought godly counsel

there's a multitude of counselors it says the safety there it's good to sound it out with other people rather than rush and then we see number seven do we have peace in our spirit does the holy spirit give me peace about this or am i feeling convicted or uneasy the bible tells us let the peace of god rule in your hearts do i have peace after praying about this decision god wants us to have that restfulness that rest in christ and so to avoid spiritual adultery we want to make sure our heart is right these are different filters we can use to actually make wise decisions that our heart is right then we can be guarded from spiritual adultery we'll find that rest that we're in his will to be still and know that he is god so we can examine our hearts is our spirit right our heart have we got a humble spirit or a haughty spirit rather may we have a willing spirit and i've got a guard against that for myself i'm inclined to be selfish let us seek after what god will have for us to do there's a promise that people like to quote as we talked about before delight in the lord he shall give thee the desires of thine heart they're saying oh that god is going to give you the desires of your heart but they forget the first part like we talked about notice the delighting when that is right what we delight in is right our desires will be right and to delight in his will as the psalmist cried i delight to do thy will oh my god how do we guard against spiritual adultery are we delighting to do the will of god that will keep us on the right track won't it if we're delighting to do his will then our relationship will be close thy will be done what is the will of god for his church for my life of course a big consideration is to be holy in all manner of conversation in other words in all way of living so we started off by talking about how there's a danger of spiritual adultery there's a compromising of biblical principles there's this lack of

being separate and coming out just blend in just go with the flow just go with whatever the latest bandwagon is we can prioritize work entertainment whatever it be above our relationship with our lord we can miss out where worldly values shape our decisions more than biblical truths where's our allegiance do we allow busyness to replace time with god think of adultery how does it happen other loves come in other things take our time occupy our attention such that we're not as devoted as we ought to be as a spouse and i know i've got to guard against that i need to look after my wife because i make that mistake many times what about our relationship with god are we like that where actually it's not as fresh as it ought to be it's not as rightful it's not as meaningful it's not as important as it ought to be and we get conformed to this world so so easily don't we i know i do the cultural pressures to just

conform to just be like everybody else who doesn't care for the word of god doesn't care for the things of god doesn't care to seek first the kingdom of god but yeah we call to be transformed by the renewing of our mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of god and actually the will of god matters more than any other consideration the will of god matters the most that i want to realign all my priorities with what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of god if you want to guard against spiritual adultery then you want to make sure that there's an uncompromising resolve there's that transforming of your mind that you'll pursue that which is godly you'll pursue that which is righteous and when you're tempted to compromise you'll recognize it for what it is actually that's temptation that's the seducing spirits of this world that's the snake hissing in my ear hey have a look at this taste this and friends i pray i'm being clear enough tonight that it's comparing that analogy to how can we be a faithful spouse how can we be god helping us even if the other one is not faithful that we can be a faithful spouse as we know our lord is faithful how can we be faithful as the bride a likened to a bride of christ how can we be such a faithful party that we won't accommodate anything that's doubtful we won't be tempted we'll avoid temptations that places in a compromise and in all of this we'll remember that holiness is not a burden but it's a privilege to be set apart to be a set-apart people it's our privilege to be called out and separation is a good thing that he wants for our life because faithfulness in marriage it reflects god's covenant love towards us doesn't it that he loves us so we ought to be just as a faithful spouse cherishes and prioritizes their partner oughtn't we to treasure and honor our relationship with our lord like a faithful spouse we should be so in love with our lord that we don't want anything to get in the way of that that will treasure and honor that relationship and could it be actually i've committed spiritual adultery could that be our lot tonight we can come unto him we can recommit ourselves today to be the bride to be the bride who loves and serves and glorifies our bridegroom our lord jesus christ to be found faithful when he returns clothed in his righteousness and we can renew renew our commitment unto him because friends he's ready to forgive it's a good thing that we can know well if we failed he extends grace still to restore to draw us back unto him into that joy of fellowship think of it friends tonight as he rebukes that church of ephesus that they've neglected their first love how's that commitment to our lord we are constantly constantly under attack we're constantly under this temptation we're constantly being drawn by seducing that would take us away from our lord seducing we think of samson and delilah just as he lay there in a lap and he thought it was so nice but he was being conned he was being seduced friends the enemy would be seduce seducing as he always has been it's always been his game plan right from the garden hasn't it to seduce to draw us away from god from that relationship but thank god we can refresh that relationship let us pray lord we thank you as your word warns us to the danger of friendship with the world lord we know it's all too easy to go with the flow as it were of this world and its ways and neglect that which is righteous forgive us lord if that be so lord help us to be a people that will be redirected into your ways and give us wisdom and guidance lord as to where we set our decisions about what we accommodate what we have convictions about lord help us to make wise choices help us as a church that that this preacher and anyone who ministers doesn't miss the mark lord that we don't get high and mighty and haughty lord forgive us if that be so help us lord to be a separated people such that our love for you constrains us such that we'll see temptation for what it is and we'll refuse it we'll recognize it we don't want to be seduced lord we want to be faithful to you help us lord to be such a faithful bride as it were unto you our bridegroom lord that will not neglect that relationship with you that matters so much we praise you lord for these things in jesus name amen