

James
Part 6
James 4:1-10
Pastor Charles Price

Well, what a beautiful day it is outside! Thank you for coming and joining with us today.

And if you have got your Bible with you I am going to read from the Book of James and Chapter 4. We have been looking into the Book of James in the last several weeks.

And I want to read the first 10 verses of Chapter 4 this morning.

James 4:1. He writes,

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

“Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?”

“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

“Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

That is as far as we are going to read.

Some years ago I was in the country of New Zealand. I was there to conduct several series of meetings in different cities. And in one of the locations – I was there for about a week – and

they had arranged for me to go into a local high school on three or four mornings of the week. And there I had the opportunity to talk with several classes of kids and do a general assembly for the school as well.

In one particular class – they were about 13 or 14 years of age – I began by saying to these kids, “Do you like the world that you are living in? You are not responsible for the way the world is. You are inheriting this from your parents and grandparents and great grandparents. And when you see the news, if you read the newspapers and you just see what’s going on, do you think that your forebears have done a good job? Do you like the world you are growing up into?”

And we had a bit of discussion about that. And eventually they came to the conclusion, “No, we don’t.”

So I said then, “What do you think is wrong with the world?”

I said, “You tell me what you think is wrong with the world and I am going to write things on the board as you give them to me and then we will talk about them.”

So they started off with a few silly things like teachers, parents, cops.

So I said, “Alright I am not going to write those down but it is interesting that all those you have mentioned are people. Nobody says, ‘What’s wrong with the world is elephants.’ Nobody says, ‘cats or mice or flies.’”

“So what is wrong with people?”

I said, “Now I will write these things down. You tell me what you think is wrong with people.”

So they gave me a number of things; I can’t remember the order in which they came but for instance somebody said, “People are greedy.”

I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “Well people want more all the time and accumulate all the time and if people get in the way that’s their fault. And so I think that’s one thing that is wrong with this world.”

I said, “Okay, that’s a good one.”

So I wrote down “greedy.”

Someone said, “People are proud.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, they think they are better than everybody else and they look down on other people.”

“Okay, good one.” Wrote down pride.

Somebody said, “People are selfish.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, they are just interested in themselves. As long as I am okay, I don’t care about the rest.”

Okay, wrote down the word selfish.

Somebody said, “People are jealous.”

I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “There are people who don’t have what other people have and so they think they shouldn’t have it either and they want to pull them down, they want to spoil it for them.”

“Okay, good one.” So I wrote down the word jealous.

And there were others, but for the purposes of this morning, let’s just stick with those four.

I said, “So these four things are what’s wrong with the world. People are greedy, people are proud, people are selfish, people are jealous.”

I said, “Just suppose tonight, instead of going home at the end of school, you got your whole school together in the gymnasium or some other place where you can all fit and you got up and you said to the school, “Listen school, our world is in a mess. People are greedy, people are selfish, people are jealous, people are proud. Let’s see if we can work out how to put the world right.”

And supposing you stayed there all night as a school. Do you think by tomorrow morning you might discover somebody is greedy, some are proud, some are selfish, some are jealous? Do you think you would find that here in this school?”

And they said, “Yes” and began to name some names.

I said, “Don’t mention any names. But five minutes ago you told me this is what’s wrong with the world. Now you are telling me this is what’s wrong with your school. So instead of doing that, supposing you went home tonight, got your family together – your parents, your brother, your sister, your granny and you said, ‘Listen, our world is in a mess and our school is in the same mess. People are greedy, they are selfish, they are proud, they are jealous. Let’s see if we can work out how to put the world right.’”

“And supposing your family stayed up all night. Do you think by tomorrow morning you might realize that somebody in your family is a teeny weeny bit greedy sometimes? Just a little bit

proud? There is a little bit of selfishness; there is the occasional jealousy? Do you think you would find that in your family?"

And one boy said, "Yes, my sister."

I said, "Forget your sister."

Somebody else said, "My granny."

"But here's the interesting thing: you told me 15 minutes ago this is what's wrong with the world. You told me a few minutes ago this is what's wrong with the school. Now you are telling me, "This is what's wrong with my family."

"So instead of going home tonight, supposing you went out into the woods somewhere and you climbed a tree and you sat up the tree all night and you said, 'the world is in a mess, my school is in the same mess, my family is in the same mess; they are greedy, they are selfish, they are proud, they are jealous. Let me see if I can work out how to put it right.'"

"Do you think by tomorrow morning you might realize there is a little bit of greed in you, just a tiny bit, a little bit of pride, a little bit of selfishness, a little bit of jealousy? Do you think you would find that if you sat up a tree all night trying to work this out?"

And they were very slow to respond. So I pointed to one boy and I said, "What about you?"

And everybody else said, "Yeah, him, yeah."

I said, "No, no, the rest of you: quiet."

I said, "What about you?"

And he said, "I don't know."

I said, "No, no, that's not the answer. I want a yes or a no answer. Are you ever greedy, ever selfish, ever jealous, ever proud? Yes or no?"

He said, "I suppose the answer is supposed to be yes."

I said, "No, supposed about anything. Yes or no?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "What about you?"

"Yes."

"What about you?"

“Yes.”

“What about you?”

“Yes.”

“What about you?”

“Yes”

“What about you?”

“Yes.”

I said, “So what’s wrong with the world? I will tell you what’s wrong with the world: you are. I am. What you see happening globally and what you see happening all across your school and what you see in your family is actually in you.”

And that’s exactly what James says when he opens this passage in Chapter 4. He says,

“What causes fights and quarrels among us?”

That’s the question being asked all the time, being asked at the United Nations probably every week. It is being asked in our governments, it’s being asked all over the place.

“What is it that causes fights and quarrels among you?”

And James answers the question.

“Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

This is where it starts he says. Don’t look out there; it’s your desires and the battles that take place within you because it is the battles within us that lead to the battles between us.

And the world headlines that we see again and again, to some extent, is simply a multiplication of what is going on within me. Now I know that is a generalization but it is a valid generalization. And history tells us it’s true that the big problem we have to face in our life is actually within ourselves.

Now James looks at this in the verses we have read together and he identifies three fronts on which we fight or three sources of the trouble that we face within our own hearts, within our own lives.

And the three are these: in Verse 1-3: the flesh. He doesn’t use that word, but I will explain it in a moment. The flesh.

Verse 4-6: the world.

And then Verses 7-12: the devil.

The flesh, the world, the devil are the three areas in which we are fighting, the three fronts on which we fight, and the three sources of the trouble and struggles that exist within us.

Now I am going to look at that three with you.

He talks about each in two ways. He identifies the conflict first of all. And then he identifies the corrective.

So there is the conflict on the one hand, a corrective on the other, and he brings them together.

Let's look then at the first: the conflict with the flesh.

“What causes fights and quarrels among you?”

He says in Verse 1:

“Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?”

That your biggest battle is from the corruption of your own inner self.

Now James doesn't use the word “flesh” or “sinful nature.” Paul does frequently, Peter does, but the same principle is contained here.

Paul, for instance, in Galatians 5:17 says, “For the sinful nature.” Some translations (I am using the NIV) have flesh, not meaning the body, but all that a person is in their natural self apart from God. That is what the flesh is.

“The sinful nature” (or the flesh) “desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

Notice the repetition of the words contrary and conflict in that verse because within you, when the Spirit of God comes to live within you as a Christian, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is opened up a battle ground that will plague you until you die.

Earlier in Chapter 1 and Verse 14 of James he talks about the process of temptation that all of us face and he says this (Chapter 1:14):

“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

He likens this process to a conception of a baby in that he says you are tempted when, by your own evil desire – that is, it starts within you, with your selfishness, with your greed, with your pride, with your jealousy, those things we were talking about just now.

And when that evil desire is conceived, that is, it puts down root, it gives birth; it leads to birth to sin. And sin, when it is grown up, leads to death, is what he says there.

But he begins within us. Now we know the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. He does; he’s active; we’ll talk about him in a few minutes. But if the devil died tonight, you and I would still sin tomorrow because the biggest problem we face is the corruption of our own hearts. And essentially sin comes from within us.

Let me read to you from Romans Chapter 7. And we looked at this chapter in a bit more detail about 18 months ago, but let me read you again part of Romans Chapter 7, which talks about this whole issue of the sinful, fallen nature that we have.

Romans 7:15, Paul is being very honest here:

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

“And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.

“Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

Does that make sense? Certain things in life, he says, are the good and they are right. I know they are good, I know they are right and I don’t need you to tell me and I intend to do them, but I don’t.

Certain things in life that are bad – I know they are bad, they are wrong; I know they are wrong; I don’t need you on my back telling me they are wrong. And I say to myself I will never do these things but you never guess what happens: I do them.

Anybody here got that problem? Just see what kind of honesty we have in the building today. It’s a problem you have got, it’s a problem I have got, and Paul says, interestingly in Verse 17,

“It is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.”

Well that sounds a very convenient excuse, doesn't it?

In Verse 20,

“If I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

Wonderful excuse, isn't it?

I mean if I came to you at the end of this meeting, we were talking and suddenly I clenched my fist, pulled it back and smashed you in the face and said, “Oh sorry, that wasn't me, that wasn't me. No, no, it is sin living in me that did that. Oops, it did it again! Sorry, sorry, I'll put my hand in my pocket. But no it's not me; it's not me who did that.”

Would you accept that and say, “Yeah, that's a good explanation”?

No, you would probably say, “Well understand this: there's a bit of sin in me too.” Pow! And you would probably punch me back.

What does he mean? Well what he is saying is this: that there is a – well let me read you Verse 21:

“I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

“For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

“What a wretched man I am!”

He says, “There is a law of God that I love and I delight and I want to do what it right.”

But he says, “There is another law; it's the law of sin that is at work within me, a bit like the law of gravity that is pulling me down all the time.”

“So much so,” he says, “that I am a prisoner of the law of sin.”

And he comes to the conclusion: “What a wretched man I am!”

So I have got this tension: on the one hand, in my inner being, I delight in God's law. On the other hand I see another law at work in my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner.

Hence this is why James says in Chapter 4:1, 2,

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. So you quarrel and you fight.”

Now he is writing to Christians here but I think he must be generalizing at this point. I doubt the Christians were killing each other. But the seeds of that were within them, which if they came to fruition, if it didn’t matter if they could get away with it, you’d be amazed what even we as Christians might do.

But he says there is this coveting, greed; there is this quarrelling, there is this fighting; these are words he uses. Even killing, but as Jesus said if you hate your brother, even though you would never put a knife in his back, you are guilty of murder because it is the heart, the seed, that is what is corrupt.

So this is then his first conflict – it is an internal one. It is the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit within us.

Now what is the corrective to that conflict?

Well he goes on to say in Verse 2,

“You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.”

Now he is not changing the subject, “Well let me talk about prayer now...” He is talking about this dilemma (“You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God”).

“Very simply, you do not bring God into this dilemma, into this situation. You try to fight this alone and you can’t.”

That’s why in Romans 7:24 Paul there comes to the conclusion,

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Not “what will rescue me?” but “who?” It’s a person and he answers his own question:

“Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

That’s Verse 24 and 25.

And then he says,

“Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” [Romans 8:2]

Now, says James, here’s the first problem: you are trying to fight this alone and you cannot do it. But not only that, when you do pray, he says in Verse 3,

“When you ask you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

Notice how many times you, you, you, yours there.

He says, well you do ask. You say, “Well, God please help me.”

But why? Why do you want Him to help you?

Well he says if you ask with wrong motives, you want life to be a little more comfortable, a little more convenient, then he says you ask and you do not receive.

You see, we can turn to God for selfish reasons purely. We can cry out to God about our struggles but nothing seems to happen because we are driven by wrong motives, says James, because your relationship with Him is all about you, what you can get from Him, what He will do for you. You want the convenience of a clear conscience that doesn’t keep you awake at night.

Not that your life will be godly and fruitful, but that you will be comfortable. And because it is about your desires, even though they may seem noble desires (“I want to be free from this sin, I want to be free from this problem that is constantly bugging me and constantly pulling me down”) because behind it lies the motivation it’s for my convenience, it will actually feed our lusts, which are all about me, rather than remove them.

You know it is possible to have a conscience of convenience rather than a conscience of conviction. A conscience of convenience is what we give to dogs when we house train them. You punish a dog for doing wrong – you do it nicely, but in some way; and you reward it for doing right.

And the result of that: in due course the dog will begin to behave the way you want it to behave. Not because the dog has any moral convictions about the issue. You don’t want your dog to jump on the table in your house and eat your food, so you “get off” and you give him something else somewhere else.

So the dog will no longer jump on the table – not because he has any moral convictions about jumping on the table – it’s a conscience of convenience. “I don’t want the punishment and I do want the reward.”

And you know it is possible to have a conscience that is purely of convenience. “I don’t like lying in bed feeling guilty at night and I want to be free from all these things that bug me just in

order to have a clear conscience,” rather than because there is moral conviction which says, “I wish this was legitimate, I wish this could be allowed, I wish this wasn’t a sin because if it wasn’t I would have no problem.”

There is no conviction there. And we can become biblically and Christianly house trained where we do things merely to avoid personal trouble and to gain personal reward.

And he says your praying – first you don’t ask God, and when you do and don’t get any results, why? Because “God, please help me, God please sort me out, please make life easier for me, please take this away from me, please give something else to me.”

It’s “me, me, me, me” and in the prayer that he cites, God doesn’t come into the equation. It’s not about what is it You want to accomplish in my life? What is it that enables my life to become a fulfillment of Your purposes, that brings glory to You, that lives on the basis of Your resources; whether I live or die becomes irrelevant?

That’s the antidote to the flesh. Not feeling it, but putting it to death in that sense, that no longer am I living for its purposes and objectives. That law of sin pulling me down, replaced by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ that he says sets me free and my life becomes oriented around Him.

The second area – and I know we could we spend the whole message on any one of these three areas – but I want you to go back and spend time looking into this chapter later. Find some time this week to do that.

But the second conflict is with the world. Verse 4:

“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

Now he is not talking about the geographic cosmos world which God so loved and that we are to love. But the use of the word “world” here, as elsewhere in Scripture in a number of cases, is about the principles by which the world around us operates and functions.

If the flesh is all that I am apart from God, my natural self, the world in this term here is all that people are corporately apart from God, what creates that herd instinct that makes us live and behave and act the way that we do.

And the principles of this world, we saw last week (and if not, go back and read the last part of Chapter 3) is what James calls earthly wisdom, wisdom that comes at the end of your nose, what I can see, feel, touch, smell etc.

And he says earthly wisdom leads to envy, selfish ambition, disorder, boasting and evil practice (you will find all that in the previous chapter).

And if we live by the principles and values of this world, we will find ourselves in conflict with the principles and values of God.

And this amounts, says James, to what he calls spiritual adultery.

Verse 4:

“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?”

The Amplified Bible puts it this way:

“You are like unfaithful wives, having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God. Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s enemy?”

You know it’s a recurring theme in Scripture that the people of God are married to Him. It’s a metaphor, but it’s a very beautiful metaphor.

In the Old Testament in Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah writes,

“For your Maker is your husband – the LORD Almighty is his name.”

Jeremiah 3:14:

“Return, faithless people,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I am your husband.’”

He says to the people of Israel, “Come home, I am your husband. I love you; I provide for you, I am looking after you.”

Jeremiah 3:20:

“Like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel,’ declares the LORD.”

And in the New Testament, Christ is the bridegroom. 2 Corinthians 11:2 says,

“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

There are a number of metaphors about what happens when you become a Christian but this is an important one: you become the bride of Christ, you become married to Christ.

If we are married to Christ, then to flirt with the world and to live by the standards of the world is to commit adultery is what James says.

He also says in Verse 4 and 5,

“Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

“Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?”

The Spirit in you envies. The ESV says,

“Do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit he made to dwell within us?’”

Did you know God is jealous for you, jealous for your protection, jealous for your purity? Because, as our husband, we, His bride, He is jealous to protect us and to keep us.

You know it may seem hard to believe for some of us, but God is emotionally involved with you and with me. It’s not just a legal arrangement; He is emotionally involved.

That’s why God’s heart can be hurt.

I think one of the most graphic descriptions of this is in Genesis 6:8 where, in the days of Noah, the Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth and His heart was filled with pain.

God’s heart filled with pain. Not indifferent. “Oh there’s so and so down there. Man alive, they are so messing up. Ah, forget them or just be angry with them.”

No, He loves us.

And what’s the corrective to this flirting with the world? Well, if this is a marriage, there is no alternative but to the ongoing development of a love relationship with Him.

Marriage is based on mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual love. Those are the three ingredients, probably in that order, that makes a marriage work. And we are to live in that relationship of respect, trust and love.

Remember, we don’t initiate this; we are responders to love.

John wrote in 1 John 4:19,

“We love because he first loved us.”

Our love is reciprocated to the measure to which we know that He loves us. And if we know that He loves us, if we have a consciousness of being loved by God, our response is to love Him back.

And it’s His grace that is the source of that love. That’s the next thing he says in Verse 6:

“But he gives us more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

Grace, by definition, is God giving to us. And we can receive this only in humility.

So as He initiates His love, we respond to His love. As we respond to His love, He gives us more. As He gives us more, we experience more fully.

And the antidote to worldliness, to spiritual adultery with the world, is being in love with God. And that is both receiving it and responding to it.

I think sometimes we don’t appreciate; we take it for granted sometimes that God really does love us. We sang that beautiful song this morning, and I love this verse in that song, “The Love of God.”

It says,

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;*

Do you get the picture? Oceans full of inks? Sky full of parchment? The world full of stalks that become quills? And every man on earth is a scribe.

And then he says in the light of that image,

*To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

Is that just a good song? Do we experientially know something of that nature of God’s love, its depth, its power, its transforming affect in our hearts and lives?

That’s the corrective to worldliness.

And then the third thing – and this will need to be fairly quickly – third thing is in Verses 7 to 10 - the third area of conflict is the devil.

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The devil is a created being, a literal being. I know there are many folks who find it hard to believe in a literal, personal devil, Satan, but Scripture leaves us in no doubt that it intends us to understand there is a living, thinking, acting being who we call Satan, described as the devil.

And it is he that lies behind all this corruption, of course. Right from the very beginning in the fall in the Garden of Eden, he lay behind it.

He was initially the most prominent of all God's angelic creation, created before the world. And as the most prominent of God's created angels, he was the model of perfection. He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. That's the description in Ezekiel 38.

But he became proud and he said, "I will ascend to the heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God...I will make myself like the Most High God. (That's in Isaiah Chapter 14 [Vs.13, 14].)

And he led a rebellion against God and was cast down to the earth with one third of the angels joining him in his rebellion. That is the testimony of Scripture when you put the various insights together that He gives to us.

And he has been the enemy of God ever since, and the enemy of God's creation and the enemy of human beings, and his dirty fingerprints are all over the evil atrocities that are going on in our world.

Now I wish I had more time to talk about that but you are familiar with the devil. Let me talk about the correctives to that area of conflict.

And you find them in Verse 7 to 10. And I am going to just point out six things very quickly so that you need to go home and look them up and think about them and their application in your own life.

The first thing in 7a is:

"Submit yourselves, then, to God."

That is daily, deliberately, bring your life under the lordship of Christ; you submit yourself. That's not a moment; that is a day by day attitude and disposition of life.

Submit to God. That's the first thing, Verse 7.

The second thing is also in Verse 7:

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

He is not an irresistible enemy. Resist him. See him as the enemy that he is. Give him no foothold. The problem is we give him a foothold, we give him a grip in our lives, and Paul, in Ephesians 4, talked about not giving the devil a foothold.

He talked about some of the things that do: anger, when you don't deal with anger. Lust, when you don't deal with lust. Greed, when you don't deal with greed.

If you entertain these things, if you play around with these things, if you confine them just to a mental exercise in the world of fantasy, you have given him a grip. And when he has got a hold of you, he will begin to steer you and drive you until we become driven by anger or lust or greed.

Third thing is in Verse 8, the next verse, so submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Verse 8:

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

That’s a very important invitation here. If you are feeling God isn’t near, don’t just say, “Lord, please be with me, please...” Get near to Him. Come to Him. You move towards Him. Be His friend. Dare to come close, dare to be honest. Dare to open your heart to Him. Come close to God and He will come close to you.

This is in dealing in battle, in warfare, in the conflict that goes on. That’s in Verse 8.

Second part of Verse 8 he then says,

“Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

In other words, if you engaged in some sin, clean it up. “Wash your hands” applies to outward things, outward engagement, outward sins, sins that we practice.

And he says clean it up. And then he says, purify your heart. That’s to do with the inward. You can clean up the mess but if you don’t find a purifying of the heart, then the mess will still come back because the source is your heart.

This is inward. This is a much bigger struggle. This is on your knees before God. Purify your heart. That is, know the cleansing of your heart, of course, but then bring it under control to where He can purify it.

And out of the goodness of that heart our behavior patterns will be different.

And then the fifth one is in Verse 9. He says,

“Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.”

Now that doesn’t sound like the vocabulary of Christianity does it? We would rather say that Jesus Christ changes your mourning into laughter, or your gloom into joy.

But here he says, “No, I want you to grieve and mourn and wail and change your laughter into mourning and turn your joy into gloom.

Now he is talking here about inward sin with which we battle. He is talking here about worldliness by which we become unfaithful to God. He is talking about resisting the devil

within our hearts. And he says of course there is a time for joy, of course there is a time for gladness. But there is also a time for mourning and grieving and wailing.

Things touch us deepest when they touch our emotions as well as our minds and then they touch our wills. But if our emotions are left on the outside what comes to our mind doesn't usually penetrate much further.

Do we weep and mourn our sin?

I remember the first time I wept over my sin and the state of my heart. I had been a Christian for several years. I simply wanted God to be my cleaner, basically clean me up; when I messed up, just clean me up. I rejoiced in the belief that He would do so and could do so. It almost gave me permission to do it again as long as He will clean me up, which I knew He would.

And I remember – I remember the circumstance in which becoming overwhelmingly aware of how rotten and corrupt my heart was and therefore how sinful my behavior was. It wasn't my behavior washing my hands; it was the heart that was the problem and I wept in a way I had never wept. And God gave me mourning and grieving and wailing.

He has taken me there on other occasions, just not – not often enough in all likelihood. But I know not often enough.

So that's the fifth thing – grieve, mourn and wail.

The sixth thing is in Verse 10, the last one.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

When you humble yourself before the Lord, He will do the lifting. Humility before God and dependence on God is the antidote to fulfilling the desires of the flesh that we love, to worldliness, the glitter of someone other than God, something other than His will and ways. And it's the antidote to satanic attack, that we humble ourselves before God and let Him lift us up.

So where does this leave us? One thing I know about this message is it is relevant to everyone. None of us are exempt from temptation with sin or discouragement or defeat. It is all part of the experience of our lives.

Perhaps there are some of us here and we are overwhelmed by some sin. We are gripped by it. We hate it. We are powerless against it.

And God offers to us the re-orientation of our whole lives to Himself, not just a prayer that we pray but a re-orientation that is hard work, turning your heart around to Him because of all the habits of which has become familiar.

And learning to live with the fact that we are loved, that we love Him because He first loved us; we have been promised to one husband, to Christ, and that love relationship has to be deepened and developed.

And then living in dependence upon the life of God, which He has given to us, over which He is jealous, these verses say. He has placed His Spirit in us.

You know James was writing to Christians but perhaps there are some of us here this morning and we have never come into a relationship with Christ. There is nothing more discouraging than trying to live a life that you don't actually have, trying to make your life work without the God who alone can make it work. There is nothing more discouraging than trying to live a life you don't have.

And I challenge you this morning, if you have never come into that relationship with Christ that you do so today. You admit your need, admit the state of your heart, have the courage to be honest about the state of your heart.

No excuses; admit, humble yourself before God, admit your need to Him, confess your sin. Then believe that Jesus Christ died and His death was adequate to pay for your sin. He rose again from the dead. He is alive today, and by His Holy Spirit is here as your friend, as your Helper, as the one to work with us. And then commit yourself unreservedly to Him.

So it's not about what He will simply do for me, but in response it's what I now will live for Him. You commit yourself to Him and say, "Lord Jesus, I'm Yours."

I, in humility, submit myself to God and in that context, resist the devil and he will flee.

We are going to pray together. If there are some of us here this morning and God has spoken to you, there is a sense in which we are all implicated in what we have talked about today.

But if very specifically God has spoken to you, perhaps with conviction, there are things in your life that are wrong. Perhaps there are those of us who have never come to know Christ, who have never received Him into our lives.

I am going to pray a prayer. I am going to ask you to pray this with me. And if you do this, and in your heart you are genuine before God about this, I am going to ask you to stand when we have prayed. And then I am going to pray a closing prayer for those who have stood that God the Holy Spirit will encourage you and enable you.

But first, let's pray this prayer and you can pray it with me in your own mind and heart.

Lord Jesus, I confess my sin to You. I battle with the flesh, the world and the devil. And I know defeat far too often. Please forgive me. But then fill me with a sense of Your love that You love me. This is a relationship; this is a marriage. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit who is the power of God placed into my heart. Deliver me from even selfish motivations for spiritual growth so my life is lived to You and for You.

