



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 4:1-10

James

“Worldliness”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this evening is James 4, and we’re going to look at verses 1 through 10. So, if you have your Bibles, you might turn to that but let’s begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace. We come before you recognizing that and thanking you that we have this opportunity to open the Scriptures, your inerrant Word, and study them together. We pray your blessing upon us as we do that. Guide our thinking, and make the proper applications to us. James speaks very strongly. He spoke to a particular group of people many centuries ago, and yet the truth of it is very applicable in our day and age, and it is applicable to us in this room, and so we pray that you would make us sensitive to the Word of God and to the instruction of the Holy Spirit. We pray that for ourselves, we pray that for others who are meeting, for the young people as they meet tonight, bless them, we pray. Bless our time together. Bless this time of study and time of prayer at the end of our meeting. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] James 4, beginning with verse 1 through verse 10, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 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. Or do you think that the

Scripture speaks to no purpose; ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

The Greeks were pagans but they had some keen insight on human nature. They gave it in some of their stories. One is the story of Narcissus, the beautiful boy who saw his reflection in a clear pool and fell in love with it, and couldn’t leave the pond. All day, day after day, he lay there staring and pining away at his own reflection until eventually he died, and so we now have the term narcissism, which refers to a preoccupation with self, or self love. People have that condition. Societies become narcissistic, they become self-absorbed, they become selfish, and that same spirit enters the church. It’s simply worldliness.

We are worldly when we are at the center of our own world, when self is the center of everything, when we are preoccupied with self, and God and thoughts of God and obedience to God is shoved out to the periphery, and that’s worldliness. The **chief end** of man is no longer to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, but to indulge self and enjoy life while it lasts. But that is abnormal. That is an abnormality because man was not created to live in that way. We are creatures, and, because we are creatures, we are made to live under God. We are made to live for God. We are made to be selfless, and self-centeredness distorts everything, distorts our perspective, and when the church becomes that way, when it becomes self-centered, when it becomes worldly, it loses its standard.

Its standard is God. Its eyes are not on God when it’s worldly and when it’s self-centered, and so it loses its standard, it loses its perspective, it begins to see sin as normal and righteousness as odd. The church then grows weak, and it eventually dies. We face that, I think, in our day and age. There are a lot of books that have been written over the past ten years or so on that subject. People like David Wells, who is the professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has written some books on that. I think the third book has come out in the past year or so in which he deals with the nature of the church, and he’s an insightful critic of the

modern evangelical church. There are a number of them who have done that, but there is nothing new under the sun, and the problem that we can see today in the church is not new. In fact, it wasn't very long after the church was established in the first century that the church, that Christians began to deal with this problem of worldliness, and James, long before any of the modern writers took up their pen to address the problem, addressed it.

He speaks in some of the strongest language that is written on the subject. In fact, I don't know that anything stronger has been written against worldliness. James speaks of the church as being adulteresses and enemies of God. He's talking to the church in this text. We don't know the church that he's addressing, but he is speaking to a group of Christians, and he speaks in that kind of language, which tells us how serious worldliness is, and James gets right to the point. Verse 1 of chapter 1 begins in stark contrast with the previous verse, the last verse of chapter 3, where James ended with praise for peacemakers. Well, here, he begins with a question about war. He moves from what should be in the church to what often is.

The church had a problem with infighting, and so James begins with a probing question. He asks, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?” So, he asks them to do some self-analysis, to look into themselves and to find the source of these problems, to probe a bit, and then he immediately gives them the answer, tells them where the source of the problem is. It is “Pleasures,” he says, “That wage war with your members.” Now, pleasure is not bad and he's not condemning pleasure, condemning happiness or things that would bring happiness, but these pleasures are bad pleasures. The Greek word that's used here is a rare word but it always has a bad connotation in the New Testament. In fact, it's the word from which we get our word “hedonism” and that gives you maybe a sense of the idea, though I don't think James is speaking necessarily of hedonistic pleasures.

He probably isn't speaking of that, but he is identifying cravings of carnality, cravings of the flesh, and speaking of those, speaking of the strong desire to please self above others, at the expense of others, and James finds these pleasures in their members, he says. It was like a foreign army that had invaded the human personality and there was a conflict. There was a war going on within these individuals, very much I think like the conflict that Paul describes in Romans 7:14-25, where Paul speaks of the sin which dwells in him, a “Law in the members of my body, waging

war against the law of my mind.” But part of that is the desire for pleasure. The craving for pleasure, and any kind of craving, but a craving for pleasure demands gratification, and if it’s not curbed, if the desire for pleasure gains the upper hand, then it has bad consequences, and James gives those in verse 2, “You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.”

Lust is a dangerous passion because the ultimate end of lust is murder. The Bible gives a number of well known examples. Cain killed his brother Abel because of lust, because of jealousy, a lust for the praise that he did not get. God rejected Cain’s offering because it was wrong. It was an offering of the flesh. It was the pride of life is what he had accomplished, the fruit of the ground that he had produced *[break in audio]* and Abel offered the correct offering, the one that God required, the one that was required because throughout the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, but Cain did not want to humble himself and seek an offering from his brother. He wanted to show the fruit of his own labor and God rejected it, and Cain was jealous over the fact that he did not gain the praise, and so with that lust, he committed murder. That was the fruit of it, the outcome of it. There are other examples. Ahab killed Naboth because he coveted his vineyard, wanted something that wasn’t his, couldn’t have it, and so murder followed.

James saw this same problem, this same spirit at work in the congregation to which he was writing. Now, I don’t think he means by this that literal murder was taking place, these people were actually physically at each other’s throats and were killing each other. This is a hyperbole. It’s a deliberate exaggeration to make a point, and yet having said that, the essence of murder occurs when people hate, and our Lord explained it that way in Matthew 5:21 and 22. He says, “You’ve heard _____ shall not commit murder,” and then He goes on to say, “Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.” In other words, everyone who is angry is legally guilty of committing murder, not in a court of law, certainly wouldn’t pursue that kind of case, but that’s the essence of it.

He’s saying if a person is angry in their heart, they have murdered their brother in their heart. Matthew 15:19, “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.” These things take place in the heart, and that’s where murder takes place in its essence. Hate is potential murder, so

James is saying that we need to guard our hearts and minds, and that’s certainly the implication. That’s what needs to be done because that’s the source of these problems, and evidently these people had not been doing that. They had not been guarding their hearts and had gone what Jude calls, “The way of Cain.” They were engaged in all kinds of fights, all kinds of quarrels with one another, and this was becoming a very carnal church, all of this because of their pleasures.

Their pleasures were unsatisfied, their desires were unsatisfied, and so James explains the reason for these lusts, that is the reason for this lack of satisfaction, the reason why they are not satisfied, they have not been fulfilled. They don’t look to God to provide for their needs. He says, “You not have because you do not ask.” Instead of turning to God, whom James has earlier described back in chapter 1 and verse 17 as the Father of lights, the giver of every good gift, every perfect gift that comes down from Him, He’s a generous provider, instead of looking to Him, they look to themselves to satisfy their desires. Whenever a person takes his or her eyes off the Lord as the wise benefactor, the wise giver, the generous giver, and looks to himself or herself, becomes preoccupied with self, he or she will never know what he or she needs and will always desire the wrong things, and so James says, “You do not have because you do not ask.”

Now, James anticipated the answer that would come from at least some of these people. Some of them would have said, “Oh yes, I do. I ask all the time. I’m always praying for these particular needs that I have and God doesn’t answer. I haven’t received an answer to my prayer,” and so James is ready for that and he writes in verse 3, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” In other words, your prayers don’t have God’s interest at heart. You have your own pleasures, your own interests at heart. You’re governed in your prayers by a selfish motivation, a selfish desire.

Now, James doesn’t accuse them of praying for sinful things, for evil things. He criticizes their motives, which were selfish. Worldliness is selfishness, and a worldly prayer, a self-oriented prayer is not going to be answered by God. If we pray and we don’t receive an answer, perhaps it’s because we are seeking to further our own personal pleasure and don’t have the will and the purpose of God in mind. It may be that we do have God’s will in mind and we do desire God’s glory, and we

don't quite know exactly how to pray, what the wisest thing to pray for is, and that's often the case with us.

We have a genuine desire to please God, and so we pray that God might open a door or God might provide something that we feel is necessary and good and would be a benefit to our lives and bring glory to Him, and we don't get it because we aren't aware that that's not the right thing to pray for, and so God gives us the answer, “No,” for our own good. But, oftentimes, what James is saying here, is we pray for things and don't get answers to our prayers because we've got the wrong motive and we're seeking it for the wrong purpose, the wrong reason. God will not grant us requests that will be misspent or used to our own detriment and to His dishonor. He is a good Father, and a good father won't do that for his child.

So now having exposed the problem, which is selfishness, which is worldliness in the church, James condemns it, and he condemns it in verse 4 and he doesn't mince his words. “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.” Now, it is possible that James is addressing some actual cases of adultery in the church. We might think that. He says, “You adulteresses.” But if it were the problem, if that were the problem, if adultery was the problem, if this is to be taken literally, we might wonder why he singles out the women and says, “You adulteresses,” and does not single out the men. Why isn't it, “You adulterers and adulteresses”? Probably because he's speaking figuratively here, this is not to be taken literally, and he is addressing the church as a whole. He's doing it in the language, in the style of the prophets who addressed Israel in that. Israel was God's wife.

That's the analogy we have in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Hosea, and there we have that picture of the nation, seen first of all in Hosea and his faithless wife, Gomer, who had many lovers, and then that image is applied to Israel. We come to chapter 9 of Hosea and verse 1, and there the prophet tells Israel, “You have played the harlot, forsaking your God,” played the harlot in that they had other gods, they had other idols that they worshipped, false gods, and that is the equivalent to adultery. So, the feminine adulteresses is appropriate in view of God's relationship with the church, or the bride of Christ, we have that feminine relationship here, and so that feminine word is used. In this sense what he's saying is that when we chase after

the world, and we become worldly and we love the things of the world and we ignore God, and self becomes the center and God is on the periphery of things, then we are committing spiritual adultery. We're just like Israel was.

James goes on to say how dangerous that is, explain how dangerous it is, because he says, “Friendship with the world is hostility toward God.” Friendship with the world does not mean friendship with the people of the world. It doesn't mean that it's wrong to have friends who are unbelievers. It's good to have friends who are unbelievers. It doesn't mean we shouldn't love the unsaved. We should love the unsaved. He's not speaking of the world of people in that sense. He's speaking here of the world system, a system which is hostile toward God. Its central aim is to please self, to satisfy self, to promote and enjoy ones self. That's the world. That's the way of the world. That's the world system. It's narcissistic, self-centered and self-absorbed. It has nothing to do with God, no interest in God; in fact, its interest is to shut Him out altogether, and so the Christian cannot love the world in that sense, cannot love the world system and pattern his or her life after it, conform to that, and love God. The two are mutually exclusive.

But these people to whom James is writing had fallen into that, they had fallen under the world's spell, and it's as if, to go back to the illustration I've used a couple of times in the past few Sundays at Pilgrims Progress, it's as if Christian **and hopeful** had entered into Vanity Fair and they had fallen in love with the place. They decided they'd stay and they'd do business with all the merchants, and they'd just be a part of that fair. That's what Christians do when they become worldly, when they begin to adopt the ways of the world around us. So, James asks, “Do you not know that that is wrong?” Of course they did.

In fact, the question the way it's framed in the text, the Greek text, demands the affirmative answer [*break in audio*] of course they know that that's wrong, they know it in their soul, in their heart, their conscience convicts them of that, so the choice to make friends with the world is a willful choice. It's deliberate. They know this is wrong; they choose to do it. They wish to do that. That's the word that James uses. It's a word that applies to the will. They have made a choice of the will to do this, and, in doing so, they choose to be God's enemy.

Now, Christians may find themselves in an unsavory environment. They may be put reluctantly in an atmosphere that is worldly where they are tempted to conform

to the world. Sometimes we find ourselves in that situation. We don't want to be there; we're there. So, that can happen but conformity to those standards, conformity to the world is never involuntary. It's always a choice that a person makes, and we're always responsible for those choices. Well, in verse 5, James supports his condemnation of this kind of life, this attitude, this worldliness, and he supports it from Scripture. He says, “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose.”

Frank **Gaebelein** commented on that question that James wrote. He wrote, “While most Christians would answer with an emphatic no, the honest reply according to the practice of **many a life** must be yes.” I think that's true. Worldliness does not just happen. It is the result of something else. It's the result of a spiritual attitude. It's the result of other decisions that have been made. It's the result of drifting and becoming a little bit indifferent about spiritual things, about the meaning of the church and the study of the Bible, and pretty soon we drift and then we begin to disregard these things altogether. We don't read, we don't pray, we don't fellowship with the saints, we begin to miss the **meaning** of the church, the gathering together of the saints.

That was the problem in the book of Hebrews. They weren't gathering together. These things happen, and there's never a vacuum in the Christian life, or in anybody's life. What is emptied out is quickly filled by something else, and when our interest in the Lord wanes, the interest in the world increases. This is what had happened with this group of people. So, people end up ignoring the Scriptures, they begin acting at least as though the Scriptures do speak to no purpose, at least they speak to no purpose that these people are interested in. James seems to have a particular Scripture in mind when he asks the question, “Does the Scripture speak to no purpose,” but it's not really clear which specific Scripture he is referring to.

There is no passage in the Old Testament that corresponds with the passage or the statement that he makes, at least exactly, and the statement that he makes, the Scripture that he quotes is, “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.” That may be a reference to Exodus 20:5, or Deuteronomy 5:9, which doesn't say exactly what James did but it does speak of God being a jealous God. That is the essence of what James is saying here. The question, though, is when he says God, “Jealously desires the Spirit,” what spirit is he speaking of?

There are a number of different options that have been set forth, four different interpretations that have been made. I'm not going to go through all four. In fact, I'm just going to take two very briefly. But does God desire the Holy Spirit in whom He has made to dwell in us, or does He desire the human spirit, the regenerated spirit, whom He has put within us, created within us? The second choice makes good sense. He longs for loyalty in our inner-most being. He longs for us to love Him with a pure love and not an adulterated kind of love. That makes good sense and many hold that, but since the word “pneuma” the word “spirit” has the article, it might better be taken as referring to the Holy Spirit. The article with spirit would seem to suggest that. It is the Spirit, the specific Spirit, the special Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Now, having said that, the human spirit does sometimes have the article, and so this isn't conclusive, but the only other place in the book of James where the word “pneuma” is used is back in chapter 2 in verse 26, and there it's used of the human spirit and doesn't have the article. It's not the Spirit, it's just spirit. In verse 7, James refers to the devil, uses the article, it's the definite person of the devil. He is referring to a specific person, and so that might suggest that the article here refers to a specific person, the person of the Holy Spirit, in which case James means that God has placed His Holy Spirit in us, every believer has the Holy Spirit, and He will not tolerate in the Christian soul any rival to the Holy Spirit, such as a spirit of this world, a spirit of worldliness.

Either way, if we take that as referring to the human spirit, we come out to basically the same point. God doesn't tolerate a divided spirit within us, a divided personality, a worldly attitude. He doesn't tolerate that. Fortunately, though, that does not mean that God will abandon us when we prove unfaithful, and we do prove unfaithful. If God abandoned us because we proved unfaithful, every one of us would be abandoned and we would be abandoned immediately. He doesn't do that; He never will do that. He will deal with us but He will never desert us, and He will deal with us in grace. Where sin abounds, grace does abound all the more. Paul tells us that in Romans 5:20, and that's the point that James makes here, at least that's the spirit of it, that's the essence of it in verse 6, “He gives a greater grace,” he says.

God's grace is greater than our sinfulness, than our willfulness, and it's able to overcome it, and not only overcome it but work within the unfaithful believer the desire to be faithful, the desire to surrender and submit to Him. But, having said that,

he then adds a word of caution in the next part of the verse, a warning, and he gives this from probably Proverbs 3:34. It might be from one of the Psalms, Psalm 136, but they both say about the same thing, which is put in different words. Kind of a paraphrase here by James, “God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.” God’s wrath is on those whose hearts are turned away from Him, who are proud, who are arrogant, who are autonomous in their thinking, who have no interest in God. This is the unbeliever. His wrath is on that person.

But James assumes that these people to whom he’s writing are Christians, and even though backslidden are basically humble people. They have a new nature. They are backslidden but basically they are humble, they know they are creatures, they know that they are in and of themselves insufficient, and because of who they are, they are willing and will be willing to receive mercy, have been willing to receive mercy. That’s how they came to the Lord. It was by receiving His mercy and salvation. So, because they are that way, basically humble, then they should respond to God’s grace, and that’s the counsel that James gives in the next verses. He says submit to God, draw near to God, humble yourselves.

In short, James calls upon this church to repent, and it’s an urgency about it. The sense of that is, “Start doing this. Don’t delay. This is urgent. This is always urgent. This is not something that one can put off.” It begins in verse 7 with the command, “Submit therefore to God.” That is the logical thing to do, because God gives grace to the humble, it’s logical then to submit and become humble. That’s the way we should respond. This might suggest a military image that James is using. The Lord is the commander and we are to submit to His rule. That is the cure to worldliness. That’s the first step, submitting to God.

The prodigal son, you’ll remember, goes off and leaves the father’s house to go his own way and to do what he wanted to do, and he lives this riotous life in the far country. Finally, after he loses everything and ends up in the pigsty, then, when he comes to himself, the first step back is submitting to his father in his heart, in his mind. He says, “I’ll go home. I’ll become a servant in my father’s house.” He was willing to submit himself, and then he got up and he came back, and so that’s where things start. That was the beginning of that man turning from the world and returning to the safety of his home, submitting to God.

The other side to submitting, though, is resisting, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The word devil means slanderer, and that’s what he does. That’s a big part of his ministry. He slanders the saints before the throne of God, and he slanders God before the world and before the saints, and we must resist him, meaning we must resist his lies, his deceptions. Eve didn’t do that. The devil, Satan, the serpent slandered God. He did that by casting doubt on God’s Word, and he did that by sowing seeds of suspicion in Eve’s heart and brought it all into question, everything that God had commanded and all of God’s goodness.

He brought everything into question, and that was the beginning of narcissism. That was the beginning of self-centeredness. “You will be like God,” he told her, and so she became the center of everything. She looked at herself, she put God on the periphery, put Him out of the picture altogether. She was concerned about herself being like God. That’s what the devil wants us to do. He wants us to focus on our self and not focus on God. The author of Hebrews tell us we’re in a race, and the way to run the race is to keep our eyes on Christ, the author and perfecter of faith, and Satan’s ploy is to get our eyes on our self and to think about our self and all the things we need, and how we’re going to be happy and how we can make our self happy, and how we can become like God.

Well, Eve didn’t resist the devil, and we know the story. The Lord did, and He is the counterbalance to that. He was tempted out in the wilderness. What God had given Adam and Eve was a garden. The result of what they had done with it was now the world is a wilderness and Jesus is out in the wilderness for 40 days, and he’s tempted, tested by the devil, and he answered the temptations with Scripture. Every temptation is answered with Scripture, and then at the end of it he says, “Be gone, Satan,” and Satan left. We resist the devil in the same way. We resist the devil by submitting to God and answering temptation with Scripture. That is the sword of the Christian’s battle, the Word of God. We need to know it and we need to use it. We need to use it effectively.

The devil flees from that because he can’t lead anyone into sin who will not consent. He is a defeated enemy. He cannot overpower us, he cannot control the child of God, he cannot make his home in the child of God; he cannot do that. The only influence that Satan or his minions can have over the child of God is the influence that he has where we give him a place, where we give him opportunity,

where we open up to his influences and his temptations, which is what these people had done. They had gone after the world willingly [*break in audio*] willingly chosen to do that. So, that's how we resist him. We submit to God and we use the Scriptures as our Lord did.

Next, James says, “Draw near.” They were far from God. Sin does that. Sin alienates. It can't break the connection we have with God. It can't turn us into children of the devil. It can't dislodge us from God's family. We're new creatures. Old things have passed away, they're gone, the old man is dead; we are new creatures in Jesus Christ. We can never be anything but that. But we can be separated in our fellowship with Him. Sin alienates so that we're not walking with the Lord. They were like that. They were like these people to whom James is writing, or like the prodigal who had gone to a far country. But, when the prodigal returned to his father, you remember what his father did. His father went to meet him. In fact, his father ran to meet him and he embraced his son.

That is what James is saying the Lord will do. God will receive us, God will draw near to us. Draw near to Him, He will draw near to you, so he says, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” The hands in the Bible signify deeds. We do deeds with our hands, we do things with our hands, and so James is saying that we're to put away evil deeds, and we are to purify our hearts, cleanse our hands, purify our hearts. Well, how do we do that? How do we purify our hearts? Well, we purify our hearts by confessing our sins to the Lord. That's what John tells us, 1 John 1:9, confess our sins and God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, restores us to fellowship, restores us to that vital relationship with Him, so this is what we're to do.

Now, we do this by the grace of God. It's the grace of God that prevails upon us to desire the things that we're to desire. It's the grace of God, who never leaves us, never abandons us. We go to the far country but He does not abandon us, and He deals with us in grace and brings us to a new disposition, the proper disposition so that we want to submit so that we confess, so that we enter into this vital relationship with Him. Well, this call for a confession, for repentance is what he calls for from these individuals, and he continues with that in verses 9 and 10, “Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Now, that’s a great promise. Humble yourselves and He will exalt you. The allure of the world, the temptation of the devil and of the flesh is that what we want most can be had by ourselves, by our efforts. We just need to take it. We just need to seize it and satisfy self. That’s why these believers were not praying to God and asking that His will be done, but were fighting for their own rights and their own privileges and the pleasures that they wanted to satisfy, and, as a result, were at war with one another. Just like Eve and then Adam, grabbed the fruit and tried to satisfy self and gain happiness, contrary to the command of God, the law of God. These people then, and people today, do the same thing. They try to have it their way, go their own way, take things in their own hands, seize things and satisfy their desires.

James says that the way to fulfillment is through humility. It’s by humbling ourselves. It’s by obedience. It’s by accepting the place that God has created us to occupy, and that place is the place of a creature. We are not gods, we never will be gods, it is a deception to think that we will be gods, as Satan said to Eve that she would be, she’ll be like God. Never will be, can’t be. We’re creatures, and we’ll never be happy, we’ll never have genuine joy and satisfaction in life until we take that place, until we understand who we are and live as we are to be, as creatures in submission to God, living in obedience to Him. That’s how we are to live. We are to live to glorify Him and enjoy Him. Not enjoy self, but enjoy Him, and then we will enjoy self, and then James says we will be exalted. We will be fulfilled. We will have real joy in life.

I don’t think that the church is doing that. I think that the modern critics are right, that the church has become very worldly, that the church is too busy with the things of the world to give much attention to God, to think about God. That’s one of the great themes that David Wells develops in his books. Christians today don’t know what they believe. They don’t know much about God, they don’t think much about God. They think about themselves, they think about their problems, they think about ways to solve those problems, which are valid problems and need to be addressed – how to be a good husband, a good wife, a good parent, how to raise children the right way and how to balance the checkbook and all that – we’ve got to live an orderly life.

Those things are important, but those things aren’t of first importance, and today much of the church doesn’t give any attention to the person of God, who He is, His glory, His greatness, the person _____ God had, all of that. They don’t know

what they believe, why they believe it; God is on the periphery. I think they're right. That's a criticism and I think it's a correct criticism. The church is off living in a far country, and just like Narcissus, the church is pining away, it's growing weaker and weaker, and it will continue to grow weaker and continue to be ineffective as long as it lives this kind of leisurely indifferent life.

Evangelicalism says be happy. James says be miserable and mourn and weep, and that is a word for you and for me, because while I can stand here and criticize the church generally and you can nod along with me, the fact of the matter is we have the same problem in this place, in Believers Chapel, and we will struggle with this to the day we die because this is the nature of the conflict we're in. The flesh and the spirit that war with each other. The law of sin within our members wars with our mind, and it will do that until the day we die, and how do we deal with it? Just the way James said, we're to submit to God. We are to weep, we're to mourn, and God help us to do that, that we might be faithful servants and effective servants of Him. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do pray that you would work within us to cause us to be the kind of people that James exhorts his readers to be, that we would be people who submit to you and live for you. We love the world, we all do. The way to break that is to submit but, to submit, we must have you work within us to change our hearts and to give us a love for you that is far greater than the love we might have for the world, and so we pray that you would do that, Father. Make us men and women who are faithful to you, to your Word, to your service. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.