

More Grace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 March 2009

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] James 4, 1-10. 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 towards God?

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

Or do you think the 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.

[1:07] 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. From James, God the Holy Spirit through the heart and life of James.

So we're at the mall and we're taking a survey. And question number one is this. Are you an enemy of God?

What do you think? What do you think would be our responses, our tallies? We've got the sheet and the line drawn. Yes and no. Would there be more yeses or more noes?

Would there be any yeses? Or is not God just this God of love that has no enemies? And if he does, well, there are just those few lowest of the dregs of society.

Certainly James, hearers, did not think of themselves as enemies of God. But then James speaks up and says, you adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

[2:27] Anyone who considers, who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. And at once we realize that there's a whole lot more enemies of God than what people think.

They're not rare at all. In fact, they're as common as friends of the world. James has already spoken in chapter 2 about Abraham, who was called God's friend.

And now he speaks of those on the earth who are called God's enemies. Now, there's some people that, to be aware that they are our enemy, it's really no sweat off of our back.

We really are not threatened by them as an enemy. God is no such enemy. You can run, but you cannot hide from him. You can ignore him, but only for a while.

Because Scripture tells us that he's coming to repay his enemies, all that they deserve. Isaiah 66, 6. So there's no worse enemy to have than God.

[3:37] And at the same time, there is no better friend than to have God as your friend. So, we want to be sure that God is our friend and not our enemy.

We have three points to consider in verses 4 through 6. There's a point for each verse. Number one, our great decision. Number two, our great problem.

And three, our greater provision. So first of all, our great decision. Friend of God? Friend of the world?

Now, as we come to this verse 4, we want to remember that there are three verses that go before it. What has James been saying in this context?

Well, he's asked, hasn't he? What causes fights and quarrels among you? And he answered it. Don't they come from your desires within you? That battle within you?

[4 : 36] You want something, but you don't get it. And so you fight and quarrel. And you find that James' answer to his own question is that the reason you're fighting and quarreling is because of these desires in your hearts that you have crowned king.

And you must have them or there will be war. And this is the same commitment to selfish desires that not only causes conflict in your relationships, but also causes conflict in your prayer life with God.

That's the reason that your prayers aren't answered either, because you ask with wrong motives, self-desires. And so it's one and the same thing.

It's these selfish desires in the heart that I must have fulfilled that both cause conflict with people in my life and cause conflict with God such that he does not answer my prayers.

Now, in verse 4, James has another name for this commitment to our own desires. He says, it is friendship with the world. That's what it is.

[5 : 50] It's the very essence of worldliness. Now, maybe you have never thought that demanding what you want is worldliness.

Then think again, James says. You thought that worldliness was just things like drinking and smoking and cussing and long hair and short skirts.

But James goes to the very heart of worldliness. And at its core, worldliness is this. It's putting self at the center.

Self at the center instead of God. It's that commitment to satisfy my desires to get what I want to live for myself, to pursue my agenda without reference to God.

So I go to school without thinking about God. And I go to work without thoughts of God. And I come to church without thinking of God and what He wants.

[6 : 49] And I do family. And I treat my wife and my husband. And I relate to people without thought of God in regard for Him and His law. It's living without God in the picture.

I spend my money without thoughts of God. I spend my time without regard to God. That's worldliness. That's what the world is pursuing.

It's life without God. And with God out of the picture, self quickly fills the vacuum. Self-centeredness is worldliness.

John MacArthur says the goal of the world is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and every other form of self-serving.

The repeated word in that sentence, in that quote, is self. So the self-centered person is the friend of the world, is the worldly person. That's what James is saying.

[7 : 54] So we adopt not God's standards for how to live, but we adopt the worldly set of standards and values and priorities and goals and interests.

We live by worldly wisdom. And haven't we just come through chapter 3 and seen the difference between worldly wisdom and that wisdom that's from above? Worldly wisdom is marked by what? Envy and selfish ambition. Yes, and now James says that same envy and selfish ambition, that's what marks a friend of the world because that's how the world operates.

It's got self at the center. selfish ambition being ambitious for me. So do you see the connection in what James is saying?

It goes all the way back to chapter 1 and verse 27 where he told us that religion that God our Father accepts is pure and faultless has this element to it, keeping oneself from being polluted by the world.

[8 : 59] world. And now here in James chapter 4 and verse 4 he begins to unpack for us what is this worldliness anyway? And what does it mean to keep oneself from being polluted by the world?

There is no true religion without separation from the world. There's only worthless religion. And so James tells us to be polluted by the world, to be the friend of the world is to be infected with their same self-centered view of life.

That commitment to me, to my desires, that pursuit of the lust of the flesh, the lust or desires of the eyes, the pride of life.

self. That's the worldliness. That's what constitutes a friend of the world. And by the way, he says that is hatred toward God.

To be, don't you know that a friend of the world is an enemy, is an enemy of God and is hatred. Friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

[10:10] Why so? Because self is being pursued at God's expense. He's the only one worth having at the center of our life. He's the only one worth living for and we refuse to put him in his rightful place and we put ourselves instead.

So it's enmity. God says, I'm worth living for and we say, no, you're not. I'm worth living for. There's hatred. There's opposition. There's warfare. We enthrone ourselves where God alone deserves to be.

And James says, that is not only friendship with the world, but it's also hatred toward God. So we're back at the mall in question number two.

Do you hate God? Do you hate God? Again, yes and no column. I'm sure we'd have far more no's than we would yes.

But then James speaks up and says, well, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God because you're refusing to submit your desires to what God wants.

[11:16] You're fighting for your way over his. And whenever the two collide, your will always trumps what he wills. So again, James would say, you might not have thought of that as being hatred toward God.

Just living for yourself. But God thinks that way. He considers it hatred. Romans 8 and verse 7.

Paul will come along later in the New Testament days and say to us in Romans 8:7, the sinful mind is hostile to God.

Hostile to God. There's our same hatred toward God. How does it show itself, Paul? Well, he goes on to say the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

So God says avoid sexual immorality. God's law says children honor your father and your mother. God's law says husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.

God's law says wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord in everything. God is weighing in on his desires and hostility to God is not always expressed by cussing him out, but sometimes just by ignoring his commands and going our way and living as if he never spoke as if he had no will, no desire about how I, what I do with my body, what I do with my parents, what I do with my spouse.

[12:56] This is hostility, hatred toward God, the scriptures teach us and choosing to side with the world in promoting your desires, you become an enemy of God, for he says anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

We're an enemy of Al-Qaeda. There's no friendship there. What is it to be an enemy of God? To have God count you as his opponent.

To have God himself stand in your way and oppose you and resist you and to fight against you. Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

If God be for us, who can be against us? But if God be against us, it doesn't matter who's for us. We're losers. Oh, it's a horrible thing to think that people are enemies of God.

But there's only two sides in the contest. There's only two sides in the war. There are no neutral parties in this conflict. You're either for God or you're for the world.

[14:14] They're inveterate enemies. It's impossible to be the friend of one and the other at the same time. Now, some of you have more than one friend. You say, I've got this friend and I've got this friend.

And that's possible to have those two friends at the same time. But it is impossible to have the world and God as your friend at the same time because they are at such odds with each other that to choose the one is to become the enemy to the other.

No one can serve two masters. Either he'll hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other, Jesus said. And so James is speaking and he's saying, don't you know this?

Don't you know this? You should know it, but you're acting like you don't. You've got a decision to make then. Here's the great decision. Who will you ultimately align yourself with?

Young person, old person? Who will you serve? Will you be a friend of God or a friend of the world? You say, well, I'm putting that decision off for now.

[15:30] Not going to make that decision just yet. Oh, no, you're not. You're deciding every day. In fact, your decision is showing every day in which side you are siding with, where you spend your time, where you spend your money, where your heart is, where your thoughts are, where your interests lie.

And folks, the reality is we were all born friends of the world and enemies with God. And only through Christ is there peace with God through the blood of the cross.

If we're not repenting of our enmity against God and are still at home with it, we are still his enemies. So what has James told us here?

What's the connection in this passage with what's gone before? He's saying these desires in us, within us, that war within us. The self-centered person is a friend of the world and is an enemy of God.

And oh, one more thing, they are adulterous people. You adulterous people. That must have been a stunning word for James hearers to read.

[16:50] As stunning as the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 3:20, like a woman unfaithful to her husband. So you have been unfaithful to me, oh, house of Israel, declares the Lord.

You adulterous people. You see, you're claiming to be the bride of Christ. You're claiming to be his beloved wife.

You are the one who is in this personal intimate relationship relationship likens unto the marriage relationship. But when you put self at the center of your life, you're guilty of spiritual adultery. It makes you an adulteress. Someone who's run off with another lover, pouring out your affections upon arrival to Christ. It's being unfaithful to your true husband, to Jesus.

It's love stolen from him who well deserves it and given to another. So it's Monday night and the pastors of the church show up at the door and we announce to you that we have indisputable evidence that your spouse is involved in an extramarital affair.

[18:14] How do you feel? The hurt, the stabbing pain, the sense of rejection, what wounds our Savior receives in the house of his friends.

Because you see, even our temporary love affairs with self, where we leave him for self, we leave him for the world.

Just our short little affairs, our overnight, one night stands with self. It's as stabbing to him as it would be to you, husband, to learn that about your wife.

When we get more excited about a ball game or a boyfriend than meeting with him, oh, we don't consider the rejection that our Savior, our husband, feels.

When we crowd out our time of prayer, oh, he won't mind. God, because we're pursuing something that self has more pleasure in. And we think he doesn't get the connection when pleasing our desires means more to us than his commands, when we want something so badly that we're willing to walk out on Christ for the moment to get it.

[19:37] It's adultery. It's spiritual adultery. So James says, you adulterous people, you're putting another lover in the place that should be his alone.

And so I'm forced to ask, when have I last confessed my spiritual adultery to the lover of my soul? When have I last felt the rejection that he has felt because of my love for some other object, some other desire of self that's taken his place?

To not confess and turn away from such wickedness is to show that we're merely another professing unsaved Christian, just like those in chapter 2 who claim to have faith without deeds of holiness.

So we may claim to love Jesus, but in our hearts show that our true commitment is to self and to the world.

So there's a decision to be made by everyone here this morning. Friend of God, friend of the world. True to Christ or an adulteress. A great decision.

[20:51] But it's followed by our great problem. Because we don't come to this decision neutral. The great problem is that our spirit envies intensely.

Verse 5. You see, it should be clear to us just by looking at verse 4 and what we know about God that we ought to choose to be God's friend, right? I mean, it's better to be his friend than his enemy. It's a no-brainer. Who wouldn't choose God for their friend rather than their enemy? Oh, but there's a great problem that complicates the whole matter. And it's this.

It's this spirit inside of us that envies wants, desires intensely. It pants after worldliness.

It strongly craves selfishness. And I believe the NIV translators got it right when they translate it with a lowercase s here on spirit.

[21:50] The spirit that God caused to live within us. I believe it's man's spirit and not God's. What is man? Man is a body, spirit, being.

James told us that in chapter 2 and verse 26. Body and spirit. There's your body, that which you see and feel and feed and put to bed at night. And then there's the spiritual part of you that you don't see.

That which God breathed into man in Genesis chapter 2 were body and were spirit. And at death, the body returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12, 7. God who gave it, gave that spirit. And James is now speaking about that spirit that God caused to live in us, that God gave to us.

Now that spirit was perfectly God centered in the first man as he came from the hand of the creator. Adam had no other gods besides the living God, but that spirit is now fallen.

[23:03] sin. It is now perverted. It is now self centered. It is now bent on pleasing self instead of God. It now has self at the center rather than God at the center.

It's now influenced by the indwelling power of sin. So self is not neutral. And we're not standing here neutral before the decision. Friend of the world, friend of God.

Rather, we're standing here with a spirit that indwelling sin causes to have cravings for selfishness. And in the unconverted that self-centeredness reigns and in the believer, it still remains. But in both, there is this craving, this envying that is said to be intense.

The spirit he caused to dwell within us envies intensely. So it's no small problem that we have here. It's with these desires.

[24:13] These desires for self are strong. They're intense. I want, I want, I want is its continual cry. And even when we want to do good, Paul says there's still this cry to do evil coming forth from us.

So that's the reality we all live with. A spirit that is now envying intensely. And it's also the reality that is repeatedly testified to in scripture.

And James now appeals to that in verse five. The scriptures say, the scripture says that our spirit envies intensely.

James has already spoken about these evil desires battling within us. Verse one, and he spoke back in chapter one in verse 14 that that it is each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is dragged away and enticed.

These inward selfish desires, that's the testimony of scripture from first to last. It's the summary teaching of what the Bible says on this subject of the spirit of man.

[25:24] there is this presence and power of evil desires that battle within us. And so James asked this question, do you think scripture says without reason that the spirit God caused to live in us envies intensely?

Do you think the Bible says that without any reason? Do you deny this? Do you think the scripture really doesn't mean what it says? Now, scripture does not say anything without reason.

Every word of God is flawless. Everything that scripture says, God says. And he says nothing in vain. He means every word that he says.

So James has got a crowbar on these people and he's got leverage when he says, do you think the scripture says without reason? Of course not. Of course the scripture means it when it says that the spirit that is in us has this evil desire problem within.

The Bible's diagnosis of man's fallen spirit is that it's shot through with envy and intense cravings for self. And this is our great problem you see in this decision that we've got.

[26:40] This is what makes the battle with worldliness so difficult. This is what makes the battle with self centeredness so difficult. It's why it's no easy thing to remain a faithful partner to Jesus Christ and not skirt out for a while with a love affair with self.

It's why it's so hard to keep Christ at the center of everything you do in life. It's why we feel such a pull toward the world. It's why we're so quick to think about what's best for me.

It's why we can't make it through a day without plenty of things to confess to our Savior. It's all because of what scripture testifies to that our spirit envies intensely.

It's constantly putting forth evil desires like the downward drag of gravity. It's always with us. In fact, the problem is so great that if left to ourselves, there's no hope for a holy God centered life.

Absolutely none. There's only one direction possible with this drag of these craving desires within and it's downward, downward, downward. Our spirit envies intensely and if that's all there is then forget about holiness.

[28:02] But James is quick to remind us that's not all there is. And so he comes to his third point. We've seen our great decision, our great problem. Now here's our greater provision and it is this that he gives more grace.

Verse six. Yes, desires within, craving intensely, but he gives us more grace. One commentator said this is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible.

I agree after spending a week with it. Yes, our problem is great, but our provision is greater. What is the provision? It's grace.

It's grace. Now, grace here refers to God's power, God's strength, his enabling power, his overcoming grace. It's because you're under grace, Paul says, that sin will not reign over you because grace is this powerful thing that breaks the chains of reigning sin.

Grace is power. It's God's power in his people. And the good news that James announces is that there is a power more powerful than our inbred commitment to self.

[29:19] That intense envy for me and mine, there's something more powerful yet and it's grace. Grace is the only thing that can ever overcome our intense desires that would rule and ruin us.

Grace is what makes the difference between self-destruction and holiness. Without it, we'd be 100% sold out to self. Without grace, every one of us would still be choosing the way that seemed right to us.

Without grace, we would all still be going astray, each of us turning to our own way. Grace. And again, James would have us see that we're entirely shut up to God's grace.

It's our hope. Apart from him, there is no hope. There's no hope in human strength. James doesn't say, okay, now, fellas, you've seen the problems with your tongue, you've seen the problems with your relationships and your cravings and the problems with unanswered prayer, now you just need to reform yourself.

Come on, make some resolutions, get the pad of paper out and decide to do better. No, the answer is not self-reformation, it's not self-improvement because our self is stuck self is the problem, it is not the answer.

[30:35] And that's what's wrong with so much that's written today about self-improvement as if self is some power to make our lives better. Self is the problem, it's craving intensely to be satisfied.

And James wants us to see that we must look away to the only place where there is help to be found. The grace of God must be given or we will never be holy, however much we try.

Grace alone can help us and that's precisely what he gives. There's the good news. He gives more grace. So he's urging us, remember the theme of this letter of James?

He's urging us to live a holy life. But he wants us to see that all of our holiness must come from above. God working in us by his grace both to will and to do what pleases him instead of us.

And so we're able to say with Isaiah about our holiness. Lord, all that we have accomplished you have done for us. Isaiah 26, 12, all that we have accomplished in this thing called holy living, you have accomplished for us.

[31:46] And we can say with that hymn writer, every virtue we possess and every conquest won and every thought of holiness are his alone.

The provision, the greater provision. Notice with me though, the provision is not just grace, it is more grace. How sweet the sound, but he gives more grace.

You say more grace than what? Well, more grace than intense envy in your heart, more grace than your own evil desires, more grace than your craving for the praise of men, for the craving for pornography, the craving for food, the craving for things, the craving for ease, the craving for revenge, the craving to get the last word in, the craving to prove that I'm right and you're wrong. There's more grace than that. But you say the power of temptation is overwhelming. Selfishness and pride are so deeply rooted in me, John.

The world's pressure to squeeze me into its mold is so great. And James would say you're absolutely right. In fact, it's so great that you're a goner. Left to yourself, you can't make it, but he gives more grace.

[33:08] There is a greater grace to be found than what the world, the flesh, and the devil can overcome. There's greater grace for your greater need. There's more grace for your selfishness, more grace than your weakness, more grace than your more trials.

So what are you up against? What mountain stands in your way? It's unmovable. You say, how can I go on with this thing in my life?

What demands have been placed on your already stretched schedule? And you say, no way. What weakness are you feeling? What bad news have you received of late?

Then drink in this good news. Here's the cordial. Here's the encouragement. He gives us more grace. More grace. I'm all out of strength in this present trial.

It's gone on for months and years and I don't have strength to take another step. Oh, but sister, He gives us more grace. I don't have the will to fight anymore in this temptation.

[34 : 16] I'm ready to give in. Oh, but brother, He gives us more grace. I'm all out of patience with these kids and I'm all out of love for this person.

I'm all out of self-control in this situation. I'm all out of faith to trust God and to not worry. But He gives us more grace.

More grace. He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater. He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.

To added affliction, He addeth His mercy. To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. When we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed, ere the day is half done, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving has only begun.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure, His power has no boundary known unto man. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

[35 : 40] You see, brothers and sisters, there is an infinite supply of grace in Jesus Christ. He is full of grace and truth. There is this fullness of grace in Jesus, and John says, from His fullness have all we received grace upon grace.

And so you stand on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean as we did ten days ago, and you watch as wave upon wave just keeps crashing at you upon the shore.

And dear Christian, you are that shore. you are that shore. And one wave upon wave of grace just keeps right on coming. It's been pounding for years upon your shore, and yet there's another wave to follow.

He gives us more grace. The story is told about an artist who submitted a painting to an exhibition, a title.

The painting was a painting of the Niagara Falls. And so the organizers of the art competition decided among themselves, in the absence of the artist, to choose three words for the title.

[37 : 04] More to follow. there's the mighty Niagara. Tons and tons and billions and billions of gallons of water have been pouring over this falls, and yet there's more to follow.

grace. And that's the way it is in Christ. If you're a Christian this morning, tons and tons of grace have already fallen over you.

But there is more to follow. There's always more to come. There's always more grace. So what is it that you're up against? Look to God for this more grace, and you will not be disappointed.

my grace is sufficient for you. There's enough of it. There's all that you need. And after giving to you all of your life, and after having given to his church all through the ages, his endless supply is not even yet diminished in the least.

It's an infinite fountain of grace in Jesus. And it's also undeserved, isn't it? I mean, we, we break his heart with love affairs with self and the world, and he gives us more grace to repent.

[38 : 28] And we fail to thank him and to give thanks for past graces, and he gives us still more grace. And we have intense desires within us that lead us into fights and quarrels with our spouses and children and parents, and we have self-centered prayers.

grace. And yet he gives us more grace to conquer and to subdue these inward desires. Also undeserved. But that's grace, you see.

Someone has said, grace, God's riches at Christ's expense. You didn't deserve it. It's a free gift of God purchased by Christ.

Christ. The blood of Jesus has bought this for you, Christian. Grace and more grace and still more grace. Oh, blessed Savior that he should purchase such for me.

James loves to ground his teaching in the Old Testament scripture, so he not only says, but he gives us more grace, but then he runs to the scripture. That is why scripture says, verse six, God opposes the proud, but gives grace.

[39 : 41] to the humble. Now, let's just look at that scripture. It's set as a buttress to what James has just told us. God opposes the proud.

Remember, we've talked about being enemies of God. Here's our word again. God opposes. You know what an opponent is in a sporting event? Who's against you? In a boxing match, who's the opponent?

God opposes the proud. The word opposes, opposes is a military term, meaning to line up in battle against. So there's the enemy. And now if I'm going to oppose them, this word means that I line up my forces against them and I'm going to bring all my forces to bear upon my enemy.

God opposes the proud. He sets himself against the enemy. He counts him as his enemy and fights against him as such.

And we say, why does God hate pride so much? That he would fight that man or woman or boy or girl who has pride reigning in their hearts.

[40 : 51] Thomas Manton says it's because pride is a sin that sets itself most against God. God says, serve me. And pride says, no, I'll serve me. God says, I'm the only one worthy of worship.

And pride says, oh, no, you're not. I am. Kids, what's the middle letter of pride? It's I. It's I centeredness.

That's what pride is. It's what James is talking about here. Putting self at the center of our life. And God hates self centeredness. God hates pride. And he opposes the proud man who thinks that he is more worthy of living for than God is worthy of living for.

So God's determined to bring him down. But. God gives grace to the humble. You see, God is as drawn to the humble as he is put off by the proud.

This one, this is the one I esteem. He who is humble and contrite in spirit. Isaiah 66 to Oh, rather than opposing him, God gives him what he needs most.

[42 : 04] He gives him grace. And that's what James is telling us. God gives grace. But notice in quoting this verse, James is telling us how to get this needed grace. You say, John, you can talk all day about this fountain and this ocean of grace and it's got all this grace in Jesus Christ.

But how does it get down here to me? In my house? With my problems? In my need? How does all that riches in Jesus get to me?

Oh, don't you see it in the passage? He gives grace to the humble, to the humble. And so he's headed straight for verse 10 where he's going to say, humble yourselves in the sight of God and he will lift you up.

Verses 7 through 10 are just spelling out what it means to humble ourselves before God because that's where grace comes. Water seeks the lowest level and so does grace.

It falls upon the high mountain of pride and it runs right off and it's going where? Down to the lowest. The lowly, the poor in spirit, the lowly in heart, the broken and contrite heart, the humble.

[43 : 23] That's where grace runs. It's the humble man who will own his bankruptcy. I don't have what it takes, oh God. You know, the man of the world is too proud to ever say that.

He's a man's man. He'll fix this. Just watch him. Back off and watch this guy work. God hates that. God will oppose that.

But God will pour grace and more grace where he sees the confession, I am needy, I am poor, I don't have what it takes.

Oh God, I can't live this God-centered life. Have mercy on me and give me grace. And the windows of heaven are open and grace is poured down in more grace.

Because God gives grace to the humble. Only the humble will truly pray. The proud man, the worldly man just says his prayers.

[44 : 23] But the poor in spirit will truly pray. That's the law of the kingdom for receiving. How do you get in the kingdom of Christ? You have not because you ask not.

You must ask. If you lack wisdom, ask God who gives generously. If you lack grace, ask God who gives generously. And so we must come with humble heart.

You see, you can be standing beside the Niagara Falls and see these mighty cascades of water coming over the falls and you got your cup there. But you'll not get any of that water in your cup as long as it's full of something else.

You must empty it before all that provision can do you any good. And you see, when we're so full of ourselves, we're not capable of receiving grace from God.

We're called to humble ourselves, to empty ourselves before the Lord. And those who come empty, they leave full. And those who come full, they leave with nothing more than what they came with.

[45 : 33] That's the law of the kingdom. He gives grace to the humble. So living a holy life, that which James is calling us to, is entirely beyond our reach.

Any and all progress in holiness at any time and anywhere is only by grace. So let's not proudly seek in ourselves what can only be found in Christ. And the dynamics are the same for a believer coming to Christ for the thousandth time as it is for a sinner coming to Christ for the very first time. It is humble yourself. Own what you are. Come broken and contrite and humbly ask for grace. grace. And it will be yours.

Because he gives grace to the humble. He always has grace to give. Cast yourself upon him. A broken and contrite heart he will not despise.

But one more thing before we close. And it's simply this. If there is provision enough for all that I need, then I am left without excuse.

[46 : 44] grace. There is enough grace in Jesus to enable me to do what I cannot do on my own. To go another step with my trial. To resist the devil another day in my temptation.

There is all the provision that I need. So any failure in the Christian life of holiness is my fault alone. In fact, it is my pride that is at fault. Because if I were more humble, I would have more grace.

May the Lord add his blessing to his word. He's spoken to us. Let's speak to him in prayer. You right there in your seat. We come to the king of grace upon a throne of grace.

Let's seek him privately in prayer together. Oh God of all grace, we come to you in the name of our Lord Jesus and we have already received so much grace from his hand.

[47 : 49] We thank you. You've not waited until we're worthy to give us what we need. Oh, but we ask you, will you not magnify your grace and give us more?

Show just how gracious you are. Give us more grace, oh Lord, that we might not sin against you in every temptation that we face.

Give us more grace, oh Lord, that we might continue to pursue holiness in every trial. Give us more grace that we might keep you at the center of our lives in all that we do.

Do it not because we're worthy, we aren't, but do it to magnify the worth of your son who's purchased for us grace upon grace and draw some sinner this morning to cast themselves for the first time upon your grace.

We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.