

Gospel Shaped Maturity

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you that we can enter into worship together through YouTube Live. Father, I ask that the Holy Spirit would fall upon each one of us, upon me as I speak, upon each one of us as we listen.

We ask, Father, that you would bring your word deep into our hearts, and that as your word comes deep into our hearts, that you would speak to us, and, Father, in fact, that you would rule.

And we ask, Lord, that you deliver us from all fear of your ruling in our lives by making us more and more and more convinced and gripped by the truth of the gospel. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Just as we get started, it's allergy time of the year, and so if I'm a bit runny, I have a bit of a frog in my throat. I might have to cough occasionally.

It seems to be a bad day for allergies, at least for me. I don't know about you folks who are watching this online. So I don't know how carefully you listen to the Bible text.

[1 : 09] It's not a test or a quiz or anything like that. But if you listen to the text that I was going to preach on, it sounds a bit odd.

For many of us, it just seems to say things like, why on earth would the Bible tell you to submit to God? To most Canadians, in fact, probably most people in the world, the idea that you are commanded to submit to God is actually very, very unattractive.

Probably the motto of most Canadians would be, go along sometimes, but never submit. Go along sometimes, but never, ever, ever submit.

And so why on earth does the Bible say submit to God? It's very, very unattractive. Another thing is, why on earth does the Bible command you to be miserable? In fact, this text touches on some of the fears that people have about God, that if you actually were to give your life to Jesus, that you would be more miserable and not more filled with joy.

But why does the Bible command you to be miserable? And then finally, why does the Bible tell you to resist the devil? And for most Canadians, that just sounds a bit hokey, as if we're not really being serious to throw in something like that.

[2 : 27] So if you happen to be watching this and you're curious about the Christian faith, maybe you are in recovery from some type of toxic Christianity.

You're a non-Christian. You're just sort of curious. Welcome. Really glad you're entering into worship with us. And I'm honored that you would check us out. One of the things that you could do over this next half hour or so, as we look into God's Word, is think of yourself a little bit as an anthropologist.

Who's trying to figure out a strange tribe. But rather than going into some part of the rainforest in the Amazon, where no human being, no non-tribe member has ever been, you're trying to figure out this strange tribe called biblical Christians or faithful Christians.

And so this weird stuff about submitting and commanded to be unhappy and resisting the devil. Just think of yourself as an anthropologist. You're trying to think, so imagine, I don't know, you have a glass of sherry or scotch or something like that, maybe a big cigar, and you're sitting back listening to a presentation on this strange tribe and their practices.

I will tell you that despite the surface strangeness, I think, and I hope you will see, that in fact the Bible gives profound good news, and profound good news about how you can wisely and beautifully grow as an individual.

[3 : 53] And in fact, I think there is no better or more beautiful way than the Christian way. Now just before we get into this a bit more, one of the things that we're preaching through the book of James, that's what we do.

In fact, if you're curious about the Christian faith, you can trust that if you come to Church of the Messiah, because we go through whole books of the Bible, it means we touch those bits and pieces that a lot of churches never talk about.

So it's almost as if we make sure you look at all the fine print. And rather than trying to pretend that the fine print isn't there, we always walk towards it. That's what I'm going to do today in my time with you as we open the Word.

And so there's a lot of scholars who think that what the book of James is, it's one of the very, very, it might be the very first, it's not the first thing that the early Christians wrote, but it's sort of the first book that we have.

And some people think that what it really is, is like a list of topics or speaking points that should be covered if you want to help a person grow into maturity, to grow into the beautiful life.

[4 : 58] And so it's almost as if, okay, make sure you talk about desires. Okay, oh, make sure you talk about God opposes the proud. Oh, make sure you talk about trials. Make sure you talk about this. Make sure you talk about that. And some people think that that's actually what the book of James is.

And you're going to see that this morning, because what you really do is, almost every little bit of these verses, you could almost, like if you were to have coffee with me afterwards, because you're curious about the Christian faith, you could do a whole talk about resist the devil, or you could do a whole talk about submit.

You could do a weekend away on each one of these topics. So I'm going to be giving you like the 10,000 feet in the air view of it all. And just one other sort of a bit of a geeky type of moment, for those of you who are into the grammar geek type of stuff.

Chapter three and the first part of chapter four, in some ways, verse five summarizes the problem. There's wisdom, which is put in those texts as well, as well as different commands for what you do, you should be doing.

But in some ways, what it does, it gives, I'll summarize it in a moment, a very sophisticated analysis of a problem. And then in a sense, verses six and verses 10, work as bookends about what the good news is in light of the problem.

[6 : 15] And then verses seven, eight, and nine, in some ways, unpack that frame of verses six to verses 10. So I hope I haven't lost you with that geeky moment. Let's read verse five.

Or do you think the scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to dwell in us longs toward envy? I'll read it again. Or do you think the scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to dwell in us longs toward envy?

Over the last couple of weeks, what we've looked at is actually a very sophisticated, both a very ancient analysis of the human condition, but also a very sophisticated analysis of the human condition.

In the first part of chapter three, it brought out something which is very puzzling, which, you know, if you don't live an examined life, you've never thought about it.

If you don't really practice any type of self-reflection, you've never thought about it. But if you have practiced some reflection, or maybe if you've been in some counseling or therapy, or you have tried to wrestle with some types of different self-help books, or you've just puzzled maybe over a beer or a glass of wine or coffee with friends about your condition, the first part of chapter three comments on the fact that human beings are both natural and unnatural.

[7 : 40] We're natural because obviously we fit into this world, but there's something different about human beings, and the thing that it talks about in the different human beings is that human beings can tell the truth and they can tell lies.

They can do things which are very, very loving and things which are very, very cruel. They can do things where we really are attentive to other people's feelings and show compassion, and we can do things that show that we don't give a hoot about people's feelings and we trample all over them.

We can be a terrible racist and then go home and yet still love our children or something like that. That there's this aspect of human beings, a mystery, a riddle about human beings, that we can do both of those at the same time.

You don't see that in the natural world, you just see it in human beings. That there's something in a sense divided or fractured in us as human beings. And then in the last part of chapter three, it moved into a different type of self-analysis of the human condition.

And in that analysis of the human condition, it just pointed out that there's a fundamental problem of selfishness and self-centeredness for human beings. That even the best of us, in fact, actually often, even when we do things which are virtuous or good, we do them for self-centered reasons.

[8 : 55] You know, there's an old line that if you can fake that you care, then you can really advance yourself a lot in an organization.

So don't care for people because you care for them, but just care for people because it's going to help you to get promotions or it will help you to get what you want. I remember one older man, this is way 100 million years ago when I was in a working environment, and he jokingly, it was a bit of a joke, but very serious.

He said, always offer to buy people coffee because it'll give them the illusion that you're generous. So chapter three, the end of chapter three, gives us actually very profound reflection upon the problem of self-centeredness and the division and the problems that it causes.

And then the part of chapter four just about this has another type of a very, very profound and sophisticated analysis of the human condition. It says different things. It says that one of the things is, and if you're curious about how I sort of prove this, you can look at last week's sermon, but we have contradictory desires.

And not only do we have contradictory desires that get in the way, that we often end up desiring things that we can't even have. That on one hand, if we were to tell our best friend that we have this desire, they'd say, well, that's crazy.

[10 : 15] You'll never have that. Why on earth do you desire that? But we still have those desires for things that we can never actually possibly have. And at the same time, we get these desires that get, in a sense, overheated.

And as they overheat, they aim at terrible things. We can have a murderous rage. We can be consumed with greed. And even if it stops us from doing something illegal or something very, very wicked, the fact of the matter is that circumstances or something stops us, but we still have these things which are aimed in terrible directions.

And as well as that, that many of our pleasures, and it's not just referring to physical pleasures, it can refer to aesthetic pleasures. It refers to intellectual pleasures, that in fact, many of these passions that we have for intellectual or physical or aesthetic things are in fact self-pleasuring passions, that that's what's going on within us.

And then it sort of summarizes and sort of brings it to a little bit of a head in a very, very profound way. Once again, in a sense, going back almost to the first part about the fact of the matter is that we have something within us that we're divided.

There's something that we can tell the truth and we can tell a lie. And that is this verse five. Do you think the scripture says, without reason, that the spirit he caused to dwell in us longs toward envy?

[11 : 38] In other words, we have longings and there's nothing inherently wrong with longings, just as there's nothing inherently wrong with desires, but they keep being shaped or formed by envy and by implication with this, the way the word would open up with pride, with greed, with gluttony, with sloth, with lust, that there's this sort of dual nature in us.

So then after we've had this very ancient and very sophisticated analysis of the human condition, that in fact is many types of therapy try to deal with it.

In fact, the two most popular ways of dealing with it in the world, I mean, I guess there's three. One would be different types of therapy, but also different forms of Buddhism, which are trying to deal with the fact that we have all of these desires and contradictory ways and self-pleasuring.

And the other one, of course, is sort of a reappropriation of Stoicism. All of them are ways of trying to deal with these different conditions of selfishness and self-pleasuring and desires.

So in other words, it's recognized by many people that this is in fact a problem. We can keep our lid on it at certain times, but times in our lives, it does cause chaos. It costs us relationships.

[12 : 48] It damages relationship with children, breaks up workplaces. But there's a big problem. And the big problem is this, that the analysis, not just the biblical analysis, but often if you're to listen to the person talking about the new Stoicism or Buddhism, the problem is the analysis is too strong.

And it's almost as if now that it comes to the solution, they just pick a rabbit out of the hat. I compared it last week to movies where in the first half of the movie or the first three quarters of the movie, the bad guys seem to be able to do no wrong.

They triumph in whatever they do. But we all know that if that just continued on and the end of the movie was that the bad guy kills every single good guy or enslaves them, that that's a depressing movie that very few of us would watch.

So because of that, filmmakers and storytellers, often if it's a poorly done one, all of a sudden they just basically change the power dynamic that the bad guys can't shoot as well, their plans don't work as well, their hacks don't work as well.

But it's not connected to it. They just know they have to give the good guys a chance to win. Otherwise, nobody's going to watch the movie or read the book. And in some ways, the same thing happens here because whatever it is, whether it's in a sense to try to step back from your experience in mindfulness, whether it's through doing different types of exercises to curb your desires, whether it's doing stoicism and you're trying to, once again, have some method by which you control your different desires or different types of therapies that do it, what they do is their analysis of the problem shows that their solution doesn't work, which is, in fact, what most of us experience if we try these different things.

[14 : 27] You see, what they're, in effect, saying is that all of a sudden they're saying that there is a part of you that isn't divided, that isn't selfish, that doesn't self-pleasure, that doesn't have contradictory desires.

And in effect, there's an old definition of God as the unmoved mover. It's a very, it goes right back to Aristotle. And it's almost as if they say, without actually coming out and saying it, they now all of a sudden posit that within you and me, I, you, have an unmoved mover somewhere in the very center of who we are.

And what we need to do is, in a sense, unleash it or discipline it or give it permission to start to move and deal with all of these different contradictory things. But you have to say, where on earth did this come from?

And why is it that you ever think, why can you or I ever think that we have an unmoved mover within us? The fact of the matter is that we don't. So this is where verse six is going to come in, which we're going to read in a moment.

Only the gospel can actually provide, really provide, a fulfillment to that problem that we've analyzed in the first part that we all understand.

[15 : 37] That if we examine ourselves, the selfishness, the self-pleasuring, the contradictory desires, that in fact, only the gospel in the context of the Bible and the Bible in the context of the gospel actually provides a solution.

And the solution is this. What if there really is an unmoved mover? And the unmoved mover isn't in me, isn't part of me, but what if there actually is an unmoved mover?

And that unmoved mover in its unmoved center is actually good and true and just and beautiful and gracious and generous and compassionate and loving and love itself, justice itself, goodness itself.

And what if that unmoved mover, that transcendent one, came into the world with compassion and justice to move in you? And that, my friends, is the gospel.

And that's what verse 6 is going to tell us. Look what it says in verse 6. But he gives more grace or he gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

[16 : 46] This is the good news of the gospel in a brief summary that there is in fact a God that does exist, the triune God, that that triune God is love himself, is peace himself, is goodness himself, is justice himself, is mercy himself, and that he is, in a sense, unmoved by your pride, your anger, your whatever.

He's unmoved by those things. Nothing can stop God from being just, good, loving, pure, holy, compassionate, merciful. Nothing can stop him.

And he, from that unmoved position, can move. And what he has done is he has more grace than whatever it is is going on within you. Whatever the chaos is, whatever you've put the lid on, you have some control on, in every case, for every desire, every longing, every self-pleasuring, his grace is greater.

And God always opposes the proud and he always will give grace to the humble. that is, in fact, the profound good news that he really has come, he really will always oppose the pride and the self-centeredness, and he really will give you grace.

Now, to help you to understand just how radical this is, I've provided two little outlines that hopefully will be at the bottom of your screen. And if you look at the first one, and my wording here might be slightly different than the wording, but you get the basic idea.

[18 : 14] The first one is basically how we tend to think. It's what I call natural spirituality, it's natural religion, it's natural therapy, it's natural human growth, and in this sort of natural way that we naturally think, that we just assume whatever the answer to the human problem is going to be, it has to fit within this type of category, whatever it is.

So you try a new therapy, you try a new spirituality, you combine different things together in your own bespoke, self-curated spirituality, you embrace an ancient religion, it's always going to form, we just think naturally that this is the way things have to work.

And in the way they just, in fact, actually, it's just very interesting, two weeks ago I had somebody come and speak to me, they knocked on the door, and their life was a mess, and I invited them to have some conversation with me, I tried to share the gospel with me, and they in fact perfectly articulated this thing.

They said, well basically, I have too much trouble with alcohol, and I have too much trouble with drugs, and my life is in too much chaos, let me try to get myself together, and then I will come and have maybe some other type of thing with you and all.

And what it is, is this, that first of all, by your own effort, you have to do better. You have to do better, you have to drink less, smoke less, start to exercise, say an apology or two, but do better on your own.

[19 : 34] And then after you've done better on your own, then you're going to be able to do some type of religion things that maybe involve God or spiritual things. You're going to get in touch with your higher self, you're going to get in touch with your higher power, you're going to get in touch with Allah, you're going to get in touch with God or Jesus or Krishna or whatever, because there's Christian versions of this natural religion.

And then after you've sort of get control of your life, and then you sort of bring in some God aspects, then maybe you can be accepted by God. And if you're taking different, more secular things, then maybe you'll have some type of a peace, or you'll be at one with the universe, or at one with creation, or however you want to put it.

And that's just the natural way we think, and there's Christian versions of this. But if you look at the next one, well, by the way, just before we look at the next one, about a third or maybe it's up to 40% of Canadians now over 18 describe themselves as nuns, N-O-N-E.

They have no religion. They've turned their back on religion. They've rejected religion. They've rejected bespoke, self-curated spiritualities. But what they've rejected is what I've just described.

They've rejected that. They've come to realize, you know what? It just doesn't work. You know? It just doesn't work. You try to get yourself a little bit better. Well, that's a good thing. You should try to be a little bit, you know, you should try to be less rude and, you know, less self-centered.

[20 : 58] But, you know, don't forget about all that, you know, talking to God stuff or calling down the moon or getting in touch with the feminine powers in the universe or what it is or getting in touch with, like, forget the crystals.

You know, just, you know, go for a walk, have a glass of Jack Daniels. Like, just do something. Forget about it. You know, turn your back on all that type of stuff. They've rejected. What they've rejected is natural religion and natural spirituality.

But here, if you look at the next thing, is this surprising, shocking news that verse 6 has just said. What has verse 6 said? Verse 6 has said, but he gives more grace. He gives greater grace.

God acts first. Before you've got yourself better, before you've talked to him, before you've sought him, he gives more grace. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

And so the gospel is this profound news that you begin with acceptance with the triune God. God. And from there, you begin to draw near to him.

[21 : 57] And from there, you begin to try to get some type of control in your life. It's a complete and utter reversal. The gospel is this radical news of a complete and utter reversal of the natural way that we think of religion and spirituality.

Part of the, if you want to know, part of the history of the Christian faith, part of the history of the Christian faith is that we get the gospel and then we start to forget the gospel and we sink and we fall into these naturalistic ways and then we have to have, you know, the good works and we have to have indulgences and we have to have, you know, priests or we have to have the minister or we have to have this or we have to have that before we can be accepted to God.

We forget it. And in some ways, the whole history of the Christian church is proclaiming the gospel, forgetting the gospel, remembering the gospel, forgetting the gospel, remembering the gospel. And if you're an outsider trying to figure out the Christian faith, I've just explained to you the whole history of the Christian faith in a 30,000 view level.

And what I'm telling you is this is what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches this unbelievable radical news, that it's true and that it's real, that Jesus, God, the Son of God, dies on the cross to make you right with him.

When you didn't even know about Jesus, when you didn't even think about Jesus, when you didn't even care about Jesus, before you even thought about any of those things, God did everything that had to be done so that you could be made right with him.

[23 : 23] He deals with the just demands against you. He pays the penalty of the wrong things that you've done. He absorbs your shame. He offers you his perfect standing with God.

Everything that has to be done to make you right with God is done by Jesus in his birth, life, death, upon the cross, tasting all there is to taste of death and resurrection and it is offered to you this greater grace, no matter how bad, no matter how chaotic your life is, no matter how superficially, well together, put together, in charge your life seems to be, but you know and I know, I know so many people over the years, their lives seem to be perfect and they're haunted with regret, they're haunted with nightmares, they're haunted with self-doubt, they're self-pleasuring in many, many different ways to try to numb the different things, they're terrified that someday somebody will see beneath the surface as to what's really going on in their lives and I want to announce to you the gospel, it's not me, it's what the Bible says, is that God's grace is greater, it's greater and it's real and it's actual and it's in history and it's in philosophy and all, it's real, he always will oppose those things within you and that's good, you want God to always oppose that and he gives grace when you humble yourself before him, he gives greater grace so it begins with being accepted, it begins with him adopting you as his child, it begins with you being clothed with his righteousness, it begins with you being promised that you know the end of your story, that when you die,

God will say, welcome my child whom I love and that is the new end of your story and out of that place, then you can begin to listen to God say you have to look, now draw near to me, draw near to me every day, draw near to me through the scriptures, draw near to me through worship, draw near to me through small groups with other people and as you're gripped with who Jesus is and what he did for you on the cross and this profound good news as you draw near to him, let's help you with your selfishness, let's help you with your lack of generosity, let's help you with your sexual problems, let's help you with your finances, let's help you with your alcohol, let's help you in terms of your family and in your career, let me help you and that's now what we're going to see in the rest of this thing that in a sense it's not just that we have this profound story of what God has done in the past although we have it but that in fact now that you have an unseen presence in your life that you see when you give your life to Jesus and you really are accepted by the triune God and you just say we're going to say in a moment

Jesus I need your grace I need you to be my savior now the unmoved mover in the person of his son now the unmoved mover in the person of the Holy Spirit actually comes to dwell within you so it's not just that you have a story and an image that can begin to shape your life and a confidence in that but you also have his presence and his word within you as they start to tackle and handle these things addressed in the human situation you see you do not have an innate unmoved mover but by grace if you humble yourself the unmoved mover the true unmoved mover who's created all things can come and dwell within you unworthy as you are and worthy as I am so now if you think about it I'm going to sort of jump ahead look at verse 6 again but he gives more grace therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble and in verse 10 it says humble yourselves there before before the Lord and he will exalt you and that's in a sense this great news it's set up in verse 6 and verse 10 it's going to be unpacked a little bit remember I said it's as if you could take each of these next ones you could do a whole teaching session on each of them but what are the different things within this in verses 7 to 9 the first one is submit to God submit yourself verse 7 submit yourselves therefore to God resist the devil and he will flee from you submit yourselves therefore to God now you see a little bit of why this begins to make some sense it's not saying begin to submit to me so that if you submit to me enough if you grovel enough

I will accept you but in fact if God is giving you greater grace if he is giving you a grace that will oppose that's greater than whatever's going on within you and that in fact he's always going to oppose the pride and the envy and the evil that you want to do that you long to do if he's always going to oppose that and if he's going to in fact if he's going to always give grace to you when you humble yourself and if you humble yourself he's going to exalt you and by exalt you it doesn't mean that you get to rule on the earth it means that you get to dwell in the new heaven and the new earth with a resurrected body with a glory that is an eternal weight of glory an eternal weight of glory that's the end in the gospel why wouldn't you submit to that like as and you see that's if he begins with grace it's not a matter of I want to try to make you feel guilty so that you submit I want you to be in love with the gospel so that in fact you go why wouldn't I submit to that and the word submit here is primarily an allegiance word it does mean that you become now your allegiance is to the triune God to Jesus to grace that's your allegiance and out of that allegiance that's what you obey that is where you obey you obey out of that type of allegiance and this is a really important thing there's a very very if you read one of the ancient biographies of Jesus if you read

[29 : 24] John's gospel which is one of the ancient biographies the very first sort of miracle that John talks about it might not have been the first miracle that Jesus ever did but the way John works it he gives you significant miracle stories to help to reveal the Christian life who Jesus is and what the Christian life is and in the very first one Jesus turns water into wine and so what happens is this the weddings run out of wine and this is a great embarrassment and this is like a shocking thing I think to most Canadians to realize that this is the miracle that in a sense Jesus agrees with John that I want to introduce myself to Canadians by this miracle and it's not you shouldn't do this you shouldn't do that it's not no I'm going to introduce myself with this miracle and so what it is is they're having a great time at the wedding they run out of wine and so Mary says to the servants do whatever Jesus tells you and so Jesus says fill these big stone water pots fill them with water and take them to the person who's in charge of the feast and so they do they fill up the stone water jars with water and then they carry the stone water jars to the person who's organizing the feast and by the time they get to the person organizing the feast the person organizing the feast takes a ladle and it's the best wine it's the better wine that's been served at the entire party it's huge big barrel it's a lot of wine and you see this is going to be the key to this this is why the very very first thing is submit and obey you see that you make your allegiance to Jesus you submit to grace and out of that you begin to obey and you see the fact of the matter is it's just like you see

Jesus God wants to fit you for an eternity with him he wants to restore you to the proper humanity and so what it is is you need to obey and he turns the water into wine because you can't turn water into wine I can't turn water into wine I can't do it but if I obey the things he tells me to do if I submit and obey God will turn the water of your obedience the water of your life into wine and that's the heart of submit so what does the rest of the text say the first thing is submit yourselves therefore to God resist the devil and he will flee from you this is a whole big topic which I can't really get into I just want to say this first of all the word resist is very interesting it's not a crusade word go out and find the devil wherever he is and fight him no it's it's more as if it's it's really you know interesting Jono mentioned at the beginning this is Anzac Day and a very important day for Australians and New Zealanders and in fact maybe one of the few times that Aussies in New Zealand or Kiwis and Aussies sort of sort of stand side to side without being in rivalry with each other but that's just what

I sort of know from a distance and it's the resist the devil is really more like a military term it's as if they say your commander says I want you to hold this pass and you don't surrender the pass I want you to stay there and fight stand your ground and no matter how much attacks come you stand your ground and that's the word here for resist the devil and many of us think that it's a hokey thing it's a whole other topic of conversation the Bible teaches that there is there are in fact unseen beings that are evil and hostile to you that can influence you and every single human being including you whether you realize it or not have experienced demonic a demonic presence in your life the way most of us experience it is through believing lies through believing slander about yourself and believing others to be tempted to despair to be tempted to pride to have that sense when you know you shouldn't do something and you have a pressure against doing something but then there's this stronger pressure erring you to do that thing which you know is wrong and if you have experienced that you have experienced demonic you have experienced demonic presences to hold on to despair when maybe the beautiful day or a child's laughter tempts you to forget about it and it's as if this voice is no no no continue in your despair continue in gloom refuse joy you have known that just one other thing there can be in fact profound demonic oppression and some of you if you some of you are experiencing what you might think is profound demonic oppression contact us and we will try to put you in contact with a good local church where there can be people who pray over you for the setting aside and the binding of demonic oppression and just one other thing you should definitely not do anything if you are doing anything now just remember Jesus be gripped by the gospel submit to God and have nothing to do with certain types of practices crystals seances other things which are opening yourself up to demonic influence not resisting it but that's just it very very very briefly so once again what is it remember verse 6 but he gives more grace therefore it says

God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble and verse 10 says humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you that's the big picture what's sort of the next type of thing submit resist the next thing is draw near to God that's in verse 8 draw near to God and he will draw near to you cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded now this just means what we're doing right now that God wants you to have times in the day when you consciously draw near to him where you read your Bible during the day you pray to him during the day you confess your sins during the day you maybe set aside time during the week to be part of a small group where you can meet with others and get to know each other have a bit of a one another life and share the joys and sorrows all around God's word and prayer to be able to I mean you can't do it right now it has to be sort of like a wave but when we can meet together to have that arm of a brother or sister around you you know say yeah we're going to weep with you we're going to rejoice with you we're going to pray for you and let's look at God's word or to have mentors or disciples and to gather on Sundays for worship where we hear God's word and we sing his praises

God invites us to draw near to him remember but he gives more grace therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you and and then the very very next thing and this is a bit of the hard part here it says it makes it sound as if you have to be miserable all the time that's the next bit here where is it it's verse 9 be wretched and mourn and weep let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom be wretched and mourn and weep let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom just two very very simple things or three very simple things about that first of all if you read the book of James you look at the beginning it encourages you to be joyful so in fact what the Bible is doing is the Bible wants to heal and free up the full range of emotions within you and have your emotions properly connected to the right context the real you and the real thing which is going on and that's what the Bible wants to do and so what it's saying is that a few long long time ago when we were in our rural church we went away for a week of camping or something like that and when we came back we found out that the power had gone in our house and so it meant that we lost all of the we had a lot of meat in our freezer outside and we had stuff in the fridge and it was all spoiled and I remember when I went to pick up the big outdoor freezer lid and the second I did the smell of rancid meat

[37 : 29] I just about threw up like it was just oh it was so terrible if any of you ever come across something which is deeply rancid you just want to retch had to close it eventually figure out what to do so what the Bible what would you say about somebody who if they came to rancid meat said mmm that smells delicious you'd go there's something wrong with this person in fact if it was in a zombie movie or a end of the world movie you'd know that there's something deeply wrong about that movie and you'd be thinking don't you know that person's a zombie or whatever it is right and so what the Bible is saying is that as we get draw as the full acceptance of God becomes more real to us as we start to become more healed by God that what that will start to actually be like right now people can tell lies and laugh they can tell lies and they can go to the bar and they can tell everybody about how they told these lies and got away with it and everybody laughs but really telling a lie and laughing is like lifting a freezer filled with rancid meat and saying boy that's yummy and so what the Bible is saying is one of the things that's going to happen to you when you become a Christian is that your emotions are going to be healed like don't we find it abhorrent that somebody can be racist and laugh about and enjoy it don't we want that person who's racist to gag and wretch and mourn for their racism if we found out that somebody was salivating over child porn wouldn't we want them to gag over that and the Bible is just saying that as you draw near to God as this as the gospel becomes real to you but he gives more grace therefore it says

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you is that God is going to start to heal your emotions you will find evil abhorrent you will grieve over the fact that you used to laugh at it you will get you will start to want to vomit over some of the things that you have done you see there's a closing image and then we're just going to say the final verse the closing image is this it's as if every single one of us is a piano every human being is a piano but the fact of the matter is that we're missing some keys and in some cases there's the key but the metal the wire stuff that makes the noise there's nothing there and then some of the keys if you do it somebody like John would say yeah that's the right key that sounds right and then the very next one is out of tune and you see it isn't the case like lots of secular therapies and lots of other types of things that God's going to get rid of the whole keyboard or that God's just going to give you a piano and get rid of all the keys just except one or two little high notes that you find pleasurable that what happens is that God wants to restore the whole piano

I mean we don't even know what beautiful music and how we're going to sound in heaven Lord have mercy it will be so glorious and so beautiful but on this side of the grave God is going to start to work within you that unmoved mover is going to start to all of a sudden this key that wasn't connected to anything there's wires there and then he's going to start to take some of the stuff that's out of tune and he's going to tune it and then at the same time he's making you more and more fully human you're starting to learn how to play and you're playing all of the notes that's God's goal for your life and as part of God's goal for your life he's going to make you grieve you make me grieve over some of the evil that I've done my unforgiveness for my lack of generosity for my miserliness for my lust for my pride for my envy for my inattention to the demands of justice and the demands of compassion my lack of concern for the poor all whatever it is he's going to make you start to find it worth crying about and what's the final verse the final verse is this wonderful promise humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you what is the gospel friends the gospel the good news is he gives more grace therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble humble yourselves before the

Lord and he will exalt you friends wherever you are if you've been sitting I'm going to invite you to stand I'm closing with prayer we're going to have some other prayer and we're going to sing some more but just to bring this to a conclusion if you haven't given your life to Jesus there's no better time now than to say Jesus be my Savior and my Lord I want that I want that I'm willing to turn away from whatever I want that I'm Jesus I will submit I won't submit to man I won't submit to woman I won't submit to ideologies I won't submit to the state but I will submit to grace come and take me and never let me go thank you that you will exalt me that's the end of my story and for each of us one of the reasons it's so important to come and gather around God's word is that we can once again say the pledge of allegiance no it's an American model but we can once again say yes that is why I follow Jesus the one who will take my obedience and turn my water into wine Jesus help me to be more obedient let's just pray father grip us with the gospel we give you an unconditional invitation and unconditional permission to speak your gospel and your word into every part of our lives and to have your gospel and your word rule in every part of our lives we give you unconditional invitation and unconditional permission and we do this in the name of Jesus amen translation and

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