

The Fractured Self

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[0 : 00] Father, pour out the Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction, we ask in the name of Jesus. Father, pour out the Holy Spirit not only upon us who are gathered here in person, but also those who are joining us through Zoom, those who will end up entering into worship later on at a different time.

Father, we give you an unconditional invitation and unconditional permission to speak into our hearts.

And into the depths, the height, the width, the breadth of our heart, we give you unconditional permission and unconditional invitation to speak into our hearts. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So there used to be a joke about churches that when they were looking for a new pastor, that they wanted somebody who was 30 years old with 50 years experience.

And, actually, the second one I've actually had happen to me at different times. People want their pastors to be proactive, out talking to people, doing things, but they also want them to be always available on the phone at the same time.

[1 : 16] And, of course, those are contradictory desires, just as it is to have a 30-year-old man who's 50 years experience. I've been told that one of the problems that financial planners have in dealing with people, not that they have this with every person, but it's not unusual that a financial planner has a problem talking about finances with people because they have contradictory desires.

Well, they have two types of things. First of all, that they have contradictory desires, that they want to get this, they want to be able to maybe buy a house or have renovations. They also want to be able to set aside money for the future.

They want to be able to retire young, die at 95, leave an inheritance, do lots of traveling, fix the house, etc., etc. And on top of that, when actually the financial planner starts to work with people, it's not unusual that people have one or more areas of their finances where they have no control over them.

By that, I don't mean that in terms of the rent set at a certain thing, but they spend too much money on alcohol or they spend too much money on shoes or they spend too much money on boats or whatever it is.

They have a compulsion to spend that can't be controlled. And so sometimes financial planners have problems dealing with those two things, contradictory desires or ends, and areas of your life where the passion overwhelms whatever you should be doing and you spend too much money in certain areas.

[2 : 39] The Bible text that we're going to look at talks about these types of things in a very, very profound way. In fact, the one example that I've just given you connects to two of the most common self-help approaches in North America today, which is a re-appreciation of Stoicism and different westernized forms of Buddhism.

And both of these types of self-help movements are addressing a problem that you can see in a tiny way with finances, but the Bible actually has something very profound to say about this human condition and how to move forward.

So it would be a great help to me if you would take your Bibles and turn it into James 4, verses 1 to 6. James 4, verses 1 to 6. And if you're joining us online for the first time, or you're maybe here, I can't tell with masks, if you're a first-time visitor or whatever, I apologize about that.

But we preach through books of the Bible. That's what we do here primarily at Church of the Messiah. So we're going through the book of James, and now we come to chapter 4, verses 1 to 6. And here's what it says.

It sort of begins with a bit of a familiar situation. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

[4 : 02] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? Now, the Bible has lots to say about fights and has lots to say about passions, and I'm going to say something very important about passion a little bit further on in the sermon, when it sort of fits better.

The Bible here isn't giving a complete description of what causes fights. There would be other places in the Bible where, in fact, it would be acknowledged that there are times when you do need to fight for that which is good and true and beautiful and just, that you need to resist evil and enter into conflict.

But what the Bible here is addressing is the fact that the number of times that we are able to engage in a fight, so to speak, with no self-interest and no sin is actually very hard.

That it's, in fact, far more common that an aspect of self, even when it's something very, very clear, you need to speak out against the racism, you need to confront the racism in your office, you need to support a victim of sexual abuse, and you're going to support them.

And it's a very, very clear-cut issue of dealing with a real evil, but it's very, very hard to persist in that, in a sense, pure, non-self-centered, non-self-interested.

[5 : 29] It's just, it's easy to let things get extreme, to get exaggerated, and so that the Bible here is going to have us just think about the more common types of things that goes on in our fights and quarrels, and from that, bury into basically the human condition.

And so just read verse 1 again, it says, What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? Now, this is going to be a, this is a very, very important idea, and this begins to get at the things that Stoicism and Buddhism often try to, or at least a westernized form of Buddhism, attempts to try to get us, give us help with.

We like to think of ourselves, or we'd like to move towards, if we aren't, that they're already thinking of ourselves as, well, like a still, quiet lake. You know, you go to somebody's cottage, or you have your own cottage, and it happens to be one of those days when the winds have died down, and everything is just smooth as glass, and there's just something beautiful and peaceful about it.

The smooth water, smooth as glass, it's peaceful. And we like to think of ourselves as, That's me, or that will be me. Or maybe we want to think of ourselves as a bubbling brook. We don't want to be just so static, but we want something that has a bit of melody, a bit of movement, but still very constrained, and just very lovely.

And we want to think of ourselves as like a bubbling brook. Or maybe like a spring, if you get, I still remember, I'm a city kid, and I still remember when I was around eight or nine, and we went to somebody's cottage, and they showed me water coming out of a rock face, like out of the rock face, and that you could drink it.

[7 : 04] And I still remember that. It was like a magical moment for me, because, you know, water comes out of a faucet, right? You know, meat comes wrapped in cellophane, and not cutting up, and it was just like magical.

What, there's water that can come out of a rock, and you can drink? I can picture it perfectly in my mind, even today. And some of us like to think of ourselves as that, like fresh spring cold water coming out of a rock face that's drinking.

But the fact of the matter is, and this is what the Bible here is saying, and it says, what causes quarrels, and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? And what it's saying is that the fact of the matter is, is that most of us aren't really self-aware enough to realize that we are more like a nice big pot put on a hot stove, and you add enough oil at the bottom, and then you throw in a whole pile of popping corn, and you don't even put on a lid.

But the fact of the matter is, is that that's actually what describes what most of us are really like, that the popping corn is popping all over the place, and there's no lid, so it's popping out of the pan, and it's popping at different times, and it's just going completely and utterly crazy.

And the fact of the matter is, is that that's actually what our inner life is more like, although maybe in slow motion. But sometimes, maybe some of you are sitting here right now, and you can hardly even pay attention to what I'm saying, because that's what's going on inside of you.

[8 : 28] These things just popping like crazy. But if you just think about it for a second, just imagine a young man in university, and he'd like to have more money, which would normally mean getting a job.

But he also wants to have more time for himself, and he also wants to have more time to study. One moment. He wants to work to have more money, he wants to have more time for himself, and he wants to have more time for study.

Well, those are three contradictory things. He wants to have lots of friends, but he doesn't want to look like he's needy, and needing to have lots of friends. He wants to be able to do well at sports, but he'd like to have lots of times when he can sit around and play video games or watch Netflix.

He'd like to be thought of as wise, yet at the same time, he'd like to be thought of as edgy. He'd like to be thought of as a risk taker. He'd like to be thought of as dependable. He'd like to be thought of as steady.

He'd like to be thought of as a free spirit. He'd like to have girls to find him attractive. He'd like men to find him like a manly type of man, whatever that's going to look like at the exact same time.

[9 : 33] He'd also like to be able to act as if he doesn't notice their attention or need it. He'd like to have a girlfriend. He'd also like to be able to play the field. He'd like to be a feminist. He'd also like to watch porn. He'd like to be a life of the party.

He'd also like to be the guy who can sit with a good book, not needing to go to a party. He'd like to be thought of as quiet. He'd like to be able to live for the moment. He'd also like to be able to plan for the future. He'd like to be able to know what's going on in social media, but he'd also like to not to be one of those shallow people who's always into social media.

He'd like to be able to study. He'd like to be flight. He wouldn't like to be flighty. He'd like to know what all the current trends are, but he doesn't want to be one of those shallow people who knows what all the trends are. He wants approval, but he wants to be above approval.

He doesn't want to be ignored. He wants to be the center, but he doesn't want to be thought of as being at the center because that's pride, and that's why. At the same time, he'd be able to read his Bible more and pray more and be more Christian and be more godly, but at the other time, he doesn't want to be stuffy and religious, and too bad that doesn't describe anybody.

And I could go on. And probably you could. In fact, we had a little contest to write a little essay. Some of you might say, Georgia can't be a little essay.

[10 : 44] Because that's, in fact, what goes on in us. You see, the fact of the matter is, is that whether we're aware of it or not, and most of us aren't aware of it most of the time, we are not the quiet lake.

We are not the bubbling brook. We are a nice big pot put on a hot stove with some oil and lots of popping corn and no lid.

That, in fact, describes us, our inner life, far better. That is, in fact, the human condition. And that's what the Bible says. The Bible has more to say about this, because it's not just that.

It actually gets, in a sense, more... I guess you could either say it gets worse or it gets more interesting, because this is what also goes on. And you look at what it says in verses 2 and 3. It develops it.

It gives, in a sense, a fact and a result, a fact and a result, a fact and a reason, a fact and a result, and then the full reason. In a very, very interesting way. The first one sounds a bit extreme. It says, You desire and you do not have, so you murder.

[11 : 49] Okay, that sounds a little bit extreme. But what the Bible here is talking about, James is doing the exact same thing that he learned from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and in other places in the Gospels.

So James is just taking what Jesus has talked about. You know, when he talks about things like if you look at a woman lustfully, it's as if you've committed adultery with her. And Jesus looks at the heart.

And what Jesus is doing in all of those situations is he's letting you know where you aim. Now, not where you hit, but where you aim. And the fact of the matter is, is if you think about a certain woman, not your wife, in a certain type of way, what you're aiming at is adultery.

You don't hit it, but you're aiming at it. If somebody does something because you want something and you get mad at it, well, what you're aiming at in your emotional response and your desires is murderous.

Well, the fact of the matter is, is that your husband or your wife gets in and intervenes, and you realize that, in my case, that guy looks like Daniel Avitan on steroids, and I look like me, so maybe I shouldn't mouth off to him because I'm going to lose.

[12 : 58] Like, you know, self-preservation comes your way, but you're aiming at it. And that's what the Bible says. You have these desires, and you do not have.

You're desiring things you can't possibly have. The young man who wants to lust after 23 different women, he's by definition not going to have them. Even Hugh Hefner didn't have that, right? So he has desires that he's not going to actually be able to have, but there's still strong desires, and it's aiming at something.

In this case, he uses the example of a murderous aim. Then the next one is, you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. It's another type of thing, a desiring what the other person has.

You desire what the other person has. It's not even as if it's just around, but you want what they have, and you can't have any quarrel. Louise and I just finished watching, a couple of nights ago, a movie that we both really enjoyed called The Concrete Cowboy.

And it stars Idris Elba, and we both really enjoyed it. It's a moving movie, and it's on one level a very classic form of, it's a form of a very classic story, a ghetto youth, a black ghetto youth, caught between his love for the street, but not in fact completely in love with the street and the drugs and all of the things that would be involved with it, and having to live with a dad, and it's mixed in with a slum, a real slum in a slum area, a very poor area of northern Philly, where not only are there all the gang wars and everything, but a lot of people own horses.

[14 : 29] So anyway, but a very moving scene in it, where, without giving away any scenes about it, is an older guy, but not like old, I mean the kid's a 15-year-old, so the older guy's like 23, right?

25 or something, and he's just talking about, you know, how he was, the older guy was like the young guy, and he said, it's just crazy, you know, you fight over a corner, you know, one gang has a corner where they sell their drugs, and another gang is fighting for it, and you get caught up in fighting for that corner, and he tells about a particular corner, and he said, you know, people get shot, they get beat up, they get knifed, people die, people, lives are completely ruined, fighting over that corner, and he's talking about a particular corner, and the fact of the matter is, is nobody even owns that corner, and today, because of gentrification, there's a Starbucks there, and there's no fighting over that corner, you're fighting over things, and quarreling over things, you covet that corner, and you can't even obtain it, you can't even have it, and it's said quietly, but it's a very powerful part of, I think, quite a good movie, *The Concrete Cowboy*, and that's what James is saying here, and then look what it says next, you do not have, because you do not ask, and here it's referring to prayer, in fact, actually, we'll just add the next thing, so that's the fact, you do not have, the reason, is because you do not act, ask, and then if you ask, it goes next, you ask, another fact, but you do not receive, that's the result, and then the full reason is, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions, now, here's where the word passion, has to come in, it's the Bible here, is saying something very profound, you see, you take these verses, you just read over them very quickly, but if they're actually verses, that the Bible is asking us, to meditate upon, or to have, start to form us, at a deeper level, but the word, that is translated here, as passion, is really, is the word, basically, for self-pleasure, most of us know, of a particular form, of self-pleasure, and I won't say anything, more about that, but, what the word is saying here, is that the problem, isn't just that we have, contradictory desires, and multiple desires, that we're like, the popcorn in the pot, with the oil going, but the fact of the matter is, is that we, these pleasures that we have, these passions that we have, are in a form of self-pleasuring, and so the Bible is saying, that's actually, what's really going on, within you, you know, whether it's for, even for intellectual things, not just physical things, but that this self-pleasuring, is a very powerful thing, that's driving you, and so what it, what it means is, that in our prayer life, it means that often, what happens, well first of all, either that we, don't even think, we can begin to pray, because we're just so filled, with self-pleasuring, and self-pleasuring, in contradictory ways, that we just can't even, bring ourselves to pray, or if we think to ourselves, that what I'm going to do, before I can pray, is I got to wrestle, the self-pleasuring, and I need to wrestle them, to the ground, and get them under control, myself, and then I say, a non-realistic, non-honest prayer, to God, like I don't try to tell them, you know, it's, you know, but by the way,

I'm holding all these, different things down, but let me talk to you, about how much, I'd like to have, I don't know, whatever it is, you know, more, more time to read the Bible, and maybe that's, that's an honest prayer, squeaking out, but, but the fundamental thing is this, that if in fact, what you really would like, is to, is to, is to have that person, get humiliated, so you could have their job, and that's really, what's going on in your mind, but you don't want to tell God that, so you give some other non-realistic prayer, because it's pious, but the fact of the matter is, is that sometimes you even do let out these prayers, and then, and then if, if you understand that what we are is a mass of differing desires, and if in fact, a lot of what is happening, that we have in ourselves, different types of self-pleasuring desires, then if you think about it for a second, how can God answer that prayer?

Like, how can I answer that prayer? If I answer their prayer, it's just feeding their self-pleasuring, which is also just, but at the same time, it's going to just continue to have them pursue things, they can't actually even have, and covet things, and, and, and fighting, like, so how does God answer that prayer?

Like, how does he answer it? Because these passions, which is translated in passions, but, like, really, literally, it means self-pleasures, self-pleasuring, and then in, in verse four, he, he continues on, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God, therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God.

[19 : 42] This is a, a bit more of this particular type of thing, because in a sense, what, what the Bible understands, and it's going to talk about it in a very important way, just in a moment, is that the, the primary sin underneath human beings is, is pride.

and, and, and in the, the part just before this, in the book of James, it was talking about the fact that we have this constant self-satisfaction, self-centeredness, self-preoccupation, and, and, and before that, it was talking about the fact that we had this, this problem that we're, we're, we're, you know, we, we can do good things and bad things, and, and, and we're just not natural, And so now it's just talking about the fact that when you are living for your self-pleasuring, it's feeding your pride.

And pride is a way of living so that you either make God tame, you can pretend that you've tamed God, or you ignore God. And the world is, in a sense, the system, a social system, a group of friends, or a society, or a group, or an office place, or a work.

The world here means social situations organized to keep God either tame or at a distance, or ignore him. And so, once again, if what's really going on within you is a way to either tame God or to ignore him, you're pretending, but not being realistic with him.

And really what's going on are these desires that often are turned into self-pleasuring. And how exactly is God going to answer the prayer? Now, those of you who are following along with your own Bible, and I'm not going to say this so you all tell me, oh yeah, we read your blog.

[21 : 24] I mean, I write the blog, and I don't know if two people read it or no people read it or 500 people read it. I have no idea. But I'm going to do something which I never do in a sermon, which is I've been reading from the ESV for verses 1 to 4, and I'm going to read the ESV for verse 6, but I'm going to read a different translation for verse 5.

And if you're curious about why I'm doing that, I wrote a whole blog on it. So you can go back and read the blog, and it explains why I'm doing what I'm doing. But verse 5 in the ESV goes like this.

Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely? And those of you who are looking at your ESV will see that that's not what the ESV says.

And if you're curious, you can read my blog where I explain why I have just done what I have just done. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely?

What it actually says literally is that it longs towards envy. And we're going to talk about this more next week because in some ways what happens here is that chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4, in some ways verse 5 summarizes what has just been talked about in chapter 3 and up until now.

[22 : 46] And in some ways verse 6 is a summary of the solution. So verse 5 is in some way a summary of the problem. Verse 6 is a summary of the solution. 7, 8, 9, and 10 are going to have a bit more to say about the solution.

So next week we're going to look at verse 5 to 10. And this week I'm just going to deal with a bit of the summary. And one of the things we see it is that in the Bible generally speaking, in fact overwhelmingly the word for longing is positive.

And in the New Testament and in almost all Greek literature the word for envy is seen as a sin. And so what the text is saying here is that this is part of the human problem.

That God has built within us. Human beings aren't just physical, we're also spiritual. That there's a spirit or a soul. And that God created the spirit or the soul to long. That's how God created the human spirit.

To long. To yearn. And that can be seen if you go back and read Genesis chapter 1, 2, and 3. And you'll see that God created human beings in his own image.

[23 : 51] He created male and female in his image. So man and woman are equally in the image and likeness of God. And he gave us a task that we are to have dominion over the earth.

That we are to subdue the earth. That we are to fill the earth. That we are to tend the earth. That in a sense we are in a sense represent the earth. That we are in a sense garden the earth under God's leadership.

And it means that we are in a sense to write poetry and to sing songs. And to take a big patch of wilderness. And just to make it into a garden.

And to make beautiful buildings. And so there's a... If that's the case. If we are... And that we were built to have a longing. To be able to at the end of the day of fruitful labor.

Of being fruitful. And of multiplying. And of filling the earth. And of tending the garden. And the end of that. That we also long to be able to walk with God. In the cool of the day. As the Holy Spirit moves.

[24 : 46] Like a breeze. And to be able to walk with him. And talk with him. And be completely and utterly transparent. As he is completely and utterly present for him. And so we have a longing for God. A longing to create.

A longing to plant. A longing to garden. And God has made the human spirit to long. But the problem is. Is that envy. Shapes our longing.

Our longing is now proud. And so envy. Which leads to the hatred.

And feels anger. And quarrels. And is wanting to not only put others down. But at the same time self-pleasure yourself. That now shapes our longing.

Now it's in here. That our Buddhist friends. And our Stoic friends. Will say. George that's very very interesting. I didn't know that the Bible said all of those types of things.

[25 : 44] And if those of you who know anybody. Who are into Stoicism. They say. Gosh that's amazing. Do you know that's exactly the sort of thing. That the Stoics describe. And some of you. If you have any friends who are Buddhists. Like at least especially more Western type of Buddhists.

And say. You know that's exactly. Or therapists who are very influenced by Buddhist techniques. Will say. That's exactly. Like that's a. Boy. Really? That's all in the Bible? I never thought that they had stuff like that in the Bible. Like I thought it was just a whole pile of thou shalt not.

And waving your finger. And then of course the common phrase. Of it's going to be biblical. Which means there'll be lots of explosions. Death and destruction. And so it's a bit of a surprise. That the Bible actually has a very sophisticated.

Both sophisticated modern. But also very ancient. Analysis of the human condition. And then they'll say. But you see. That's exactly why you need to learn. Different types of Buddhist techniques.

You need to learn mindfulness. You need to be able to. Separate yourself from your experience. And look at yourself. As an observer of your experience. And you need to learn how to. To kill desire. Because in fact.

[26 : 42] The desire is going to. And we'll show you with our techniques. How to kill desire. How to be able to stand as an outsider to you. And look at yourself. And the Stoics will say. Well we're going to show you a series of. Of important meditations and truths.

Which will allow you. You don't have to actually. Kill desire. If you're a Stoic. They have a bit of a different answer. Than the Buddhists. But what you need to do. Is you need to be able to tame the desires. And order the desires. And to get them in a particular way.

And we'll show you a series of exercises. That will help you to do those particular things. And that's now where our Stoic. Our modern Stoic. And our Buddhist therapist friends.

Will step in. But here's the thing. They have a big problem. You see. They share with Christians the analysis. But their solution has a big, big problem.

In fact. Their solution can't solve the problem. What their solution is. Is like this. I hate movies like this. So you know I like action movies. And adventure movies. But. And I'm not going to name.

[27 : 41] I'm not going to out any particular movie. But there's certain types of action movies. Or superhero movies even. That have this very, very common fault. For the first half of the movie.

The bad guy is invincible. And if the bad guy has henchmen. When the henchmen shoot. They don't miss. And when the bad guy has a plan.

The plan works. And for half the movie. Three quarters of the movie. It's unfailing. The bad guys. Henchmen. Their shots always hit the target. And the plans always work.

Now because. If the movie ends like that. That will be the world's most depressing movie. The bad guy kills everybody. And is triumphant.

And it will get five stars from the critics. And 23 people in the world will watch it. Okay. So filmmakers don't like to make movies like that. Unless they want to have critics love it.

[28 : 35] So they make movies. And what happens. Is for no reason whatsoever. Completely and utterly out of the blue. So you have a good ending to the story.

All of a sudden. The henchmen's bullets. Can't hit the good guys anymore. Early in the movie. The bad guy with a pistol. Can hit the guy.

A hundred yards away. But three quarters of the way into the movie. The bad guy with a machine gun. Can't hit the good guy. Ten yards away. For no reason. And all of a sudden.

For no reason. The plans don't work. Why? Because you have to have a good ending to the movie. So it just comes. And so here's the problem. For our Buddhists. And our stoic friends.

One moment. We're a pot. A pop. We're a hot. We're a pot. On a hot stove. With some oil. And a lot of popping corn.

[29 : 31] And all of a sudden. You're saying that's not us. All of a sudden. You're saying that one of the little popcorn corns. Can go in the oil. And fly. And control the popping corn.

And in fact. Jump out. Of the pot. And turn the heat down. And then. Jump back. And push the pot to the side. That there's some little. Kernel of corn. That can do that.

What? Except we don't say what. But that's what we should say. What? Like how on earth. Is that possible? That doesn't make any sense. Just all of a sudden. Out of nowhere. That happens.

You just do that. To have a good ending to the story. But you haven't actually accounted for anything. Other than the fact. That the pot is there. And the popcorn is there. You see. What they in fact. Imply.

Is that there's a. You know. One of the. One of the ways. That Aristotle. Described. And if you look at Thomas Aquinas. And some of the older arguments. For the existence of God. What they say. Is that God is the unmoved mover.

[30 : 28] Some of you have heard of that. Some of you haven't. God is the unmoved mover. In other words. God can't be moved. But he can move other things. And that was. One of Aristotle's definitions of God.

And in fact. Actually. It's one of the ways to understand. Part of the Christian. Understanding. Of God. Is that God is the unmoved mover. But what all of a sudden. Stoics and Buddhists. Have to imply. Is that somewhere within me.

Is an unmoved mover. That in fact. There is that little. Kernel of corn. That can in fact. Not be moved. By the hot oil. And jump around.

And do all of those. Types of things. But what happens. If there is no unmoved mover. In you. If in fact. The matter is. Is that you are. I am. Just like. A pot.

On a hot stove. With popping corn. Now if the Bible. Just stopped right there. It would be. The world's most depressing. Religious system.

[31 : 24] And in fact. Part of the problem. That people have. With Christianity. Is that. It is. Vastly. More pessimistic. About the human condition. Than just about anybody else. But it doesn't end with that.

Verse five. Summarizes the problem. That envy. Shapes. The good thing. Within us. Which is longing. If you lose your spirit. You die.

That's what death is. The spirit. Separating from the body. The spirit. Is made to long. And yet. There is a problem. That the longings. Have been shaped. By envy. And pride. So verse six.

Gives a summary. Of the answer. And it just. With just a few more minutes. It just has. Three very. Very important. Pieces of news. And these three. Important pieces of news.

That will be unpacked. In verses seven. Through ten. And in some ways. If you look at it. Verses six to ten. Of chapter four. Is the heart. Of the whole book of James. And captures.

[32 : 21] How you to go back. And understand wisdom. And other types of things. And if you look at what it is. There's these three. Very important things. In chapter four. Three. And very important. Pieces of news.

And it is this. Get my Bible here close. So I can read it properly. But notice there's an adversative. Sorry. Grammar geek moment.

Big word. Verse five. In a way. Summarizes the bad news. Summarizes the human condition. Verse six. Says. But he gives more grace. Therefore it says.

God opposes the proud. But gives grace to the humble. That's our memory verse for the week. If you get the pastor's blog. I always have a suggested memory verse for the week. This is your memory verse for the week.

It's my memory verse for the week. And it says three very very important pieces of news. The first one is this. And they're all good news. But he gives more grace.

[33 : 19] I now often. During the lockdowns and everything like that. I often work on the ground floor of the Bible house. I just get a fold out table. And I have it. You know about a fifth of the way into the room.

With the lights on. And because of that. And I'll sit there and work. But because of that. About anywhere. Every week. I have one. Two. Three conversations. With somebody who comes and knocks on the glass.

And just this particular week. I had a guy. A young man. 30 year old man. Knock on the glass. To have a conversation with me. And he just shared. He shared.

That he'd had some success. In a type of an industry. He'd had a woman. That he'd been with for 10 years. But the fact of the matter is.

Is that his different. I'm not making this up. His passions. Have destroyed his life. And left him with nowhere to go. That he'd gotten involved. With drugs. He'd gotten involved with hookers.

[34 : 16] He'd gotten involved with lots of different things. Which were very bad. It's ruined his relationship. Ruined himself with his family. His finances are in complete and utter ruin. And. And.

And he wanted to talk to me. We talked for about 20-25 minutes. And one of the things. I mean. I've been meditating upon this text all this week. This is like I think Thursday.

And one of the things I told him is. But God's grace is greater. God's grace is greater. See that's this. Profound. One. First piece of good news.

That doesn't matter if your pot. Only has 10 kernels of corn. Which is popping. Doesn't matter if it has a thousand. It doesn't matter if. If every single one of those popcorns.

Has an unbelievably terrible aim. That's aiming at horrible things. It doesn't matter. That for every single one. God's grace is greater. For the whole shebang. God's grace is greater.

[35 : 15] For the things that you've done in the past. God's grace is greater. For the worries that you have. And the. The inability to control. The. The fact that you're still this pot. On. Of oil. And the pop.

The corn is popping. And you have no control over it. And you. You have. And you're just ashamed of it. And you're embarrassed of it. And it's completely ruined your life. God's grace is greater. God's grace is greater.

That's the good news. And we know it's true. It's not a story. God's grace isn't just an attitude that he had. But it came flesh. It walked amongst us.

It entered into history. It died on a. God's grace. He is God's grace. He died on a cross. He tasted all there is to taste of death. He rose from the dead.

He will come again. God's grace is greater. And it's real. And it's not just an attitude and a disposition to you. It is a power from God.

[36 : 13] That will change you. And it is greater. God's grace is greater. And the second piece of really good news is that God opposes the proud.

This is profoundly good news. He always. He's always the same. He's never overwhelmed by evil. He never is frustrated by evil.

He never surrenders to evil. He never decides he's going to call evil good. Or he never. He always opposes the proud. He always opposes evil.

He always opposes our self-pleasuring. He always opposes our envy. There is no end to his opposition. He is always God. And this is very good. And the third piece of news.

But he gives grace to the humble. He gives grace to the humble. He is the giver of grace. He is ever generous. He is unstoppably generous.

[37 : 17] He knows every single thing about me from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death. I don't know if my death will be this afternoon when I'm driving home or if it's going to be in 50 years. But he knows every single thing about me from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death.

He knows every kernel, every corn kernel that's ever been popped in my life. He knows everyone. He knows the ones in the future.

He knows them all. But his grace is greater. And knowing all of that, still he died on the cross for me, loving me. Still he died for me. Still he desires to give me grace.

But I have to humble myself. And in a sense, partly what this is an invitation here. What the Bible is saying here is that to being humbled, to receive grace is not just the way you enter into the Christian life, but it is in fact the entire Christian life.

That even if right now you have to say, you know, if you just pause and say, Lord, if it's hard for me to believe, I can hardly even say a word to you, Jesus, because my inner life is popping like crazy.

[38 : 27] If people around me knew just how crazy my inside was with popping and going and thinking and all, I can hardly even say a word to you. And it's hard to know, Lord, that you want me to, it's hard for me to believe that you want me to just humble myself and say to you, I can hardly even say two words to you because my inner life is so crazy and I feel so powerless over it.

And even my power over it, just it's help. Have mercy.

I need mercy. I need grace. I needed it to become a Christian. I need it right now, Lord.

I need it now. The Lord hears every prayer. Most of our prayers, he says no to them. And in heaven, we'll go up, we'll be high five in God saying, I'm so happy you always opposed pride.

I'm so happy you said no to that, no to that, no to that, no to that, no to that. Gosh, it's embarrassing right now. The only thing that covers the embarrassment is that we're all covered in the, washed in Jesus's blood, clothed in his righteousness.

[39 : 48] And all of us are saying, yeah, that's me. That could have been me. That could have been me. Wait till you see me next. But that we just need mercy. That's the news. And the news is to begin to form us.

And that's what's going to be impacted more in the next week when we come and look at verses 5 to 10 again. God opposes the proud. God always gives grace. He gives grace more than is ever anything in your life or anything in your present, anything in your past, anything in your future.

He gives more grace. More grace. And it's real. And the grace is a power. And he gives, he opposes your pride, but he'll give grace to the humble.

Let's stand. Father, we're so happy you don't weigh our merits, but pardon our offenses.

We're so glad that you see the real us and you actually want us to be real before you and humble ourselves to be real before you and humble ourselves to acknowledge our need for mercy and grace from you.

[40 : 54] Father, it's, we confess that we keep thinking that we can fix things up with, you know, I don't know, this Buddhist technique sounds wiser. This Stoic technique sounds wiser. This self-help thing sounds like it's, well, and I, that I, Father, we give you thanks and praise.

That you always oppose the proud. Your grace is always greater. And you give grace to us when we humble ourselves. And, Father, we come to you. And we know that we can't even humble ourselves without your grace.

We can't even humble ourselves without your grace, Father. And so we ask for your grace. We thank you for it. We ask for the grace to humble ourselves in a way which is the right way.

And that you will give us grace. We thank you for it, Father. And we thank you that our identity and destiny is secure in Jesus when we call out to you. Father, help us to live each day humbling ourselves to receive grace from you.

And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[42 : 01] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.