

James 4 - Submit yourselves therefore to God

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We are in the fourth chapter of James. So, last two chapters that we're going to be covering here. Not obviously today, we'll just do chapter 4 today. But anyway, in fact, we'll see if I can get through chapter 4 today. There's actually quite a bit in this chapter. If you guys thought that some of the earlier chapters of James were heavy-hitting, just wait. Because this is one of those kind of like smack-you-across-the-face and rough-you-up-a-little-bit sort of chapters in the Bible. But we're going to hang on to the love of God through this thing and the forgiveness of Jesus, so we don't walk out of here bloodied. But still, James has some very challenging things to say.

So, let's read through the chapter together, and then we'll get into it. He says:

¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You 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. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

¹¹Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹²There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” ¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (ESV)

Let's pray. Father, we need Your grace to guide us through the study of these verses because they are challenging and they are hard hitting, and we need to understand them in the light of Your goodness, and mercy, and tenderness toward us. So, Lord, help us to see what we need to see. Help us to understand, Lord, it's through Your Spirit that understanding comes into our hearts. And so, we pray for that understanding. We ask it in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen. Amen.

You'll notice that James begins this chapter here by kind of addressing the root cause of arguments, and squabbles, and feuds, that can happen between Christians. Can we have arguments, and squabbles, and feuds, between Christians? Oh, yeah, we can, can't we? Yeah, okay. Yeah.

Well, anyway here's James, and he asks some very pointed and very good questions related to those. He begins by saying: “*What causes quarrels...*” Did you notice he didn't say: “So, what are the quarrels you guys are having? What are these arguments you guys are having? You tell me your side and you tell me your side, and let's talk about it.” Didn't it make you about, like, want to drop dead. I mean, just hearing all these things going on. James doesn't do that. He wants to address the root cause. He says what causes these things, you know? Now, if two people are in an argument, they'll say: “Well, he does, or she does, or something like that.” No, no, no, no. That's not the root, that's not the issue, right?

He goes on to actually kind of answer the question by, in a sense, asking a rhetorical question. He says: “¹... *Is it not this, that your passions* (your Bible may say “lusts” or even “desires”) *are at war within you.*” All right, now, here's where we have to stop and just kind of, think this thing through, a little bit. What causes people to come at each other? Is it just because one person is full of mercy and the other person isn't? Or is it because this or that? He says: “No that's, you know, those are the things that you might claim are the issue, but the issue, the real issue, is the inward heart condition.” That's what causes quarrels, and that's what causes quarrels in the home too.

We think we're quarreling because I'm right and she's wrong. That's not it. It's a heart condition. And I'm not talking about your physical heart either, I'm talking about what's going on inside your spiritual heart. And there he says, "Is there not a battle that is waging, or being waged, if you will, in your heart?"

Do you guys recognize that battle in your heart? Do you see it going on? Because I sure do. You know, the Apostle Paul talked about it. He wrote about it in Romans chapter 7. Let me show you this on the screen. He says:

Romans 7:21-23 (ESV)

...I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

...I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (He says, you know,) For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law (another law) waging war (there it is) against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

So, here's Paul describing this war, this battle, that's going on inside of us. We know what we ought to do, we know how we ought to get along with one another, but there's this battle going on for all kinds of reasons. And the sad reality is that sometimes, we lose that inner struggle, we lose that inner tug of war, you know? We know what we're supposed to do, we know what we're supposed to say, and yet we, at times, yield to those baser instincts of our, you know, passions and sinful natures. And that's when quarrels, and fights, and divisions, break out. That's what's going on.

I don't know if you've ever been part of a church split. And the whole reason that they said was: "Because of this, or that, or the other thing." And that's not it. The reason it happened is because people yielded to their passions. Bottom line. Because, you got to know something, people, whether it's in the church or in the home, if we're following the Holy Spirit, there will be no conflict. Because He is one, right? Did you hear me? There's only one Holy Spirit, and if He is moving us, if He is influencing us, if He is truly filling us, and guiding us and directing us, there would never ever be a church split.

So, he goes on to say it doesn't end with quarreling. Going at verse 2, "*You desire and do not have, so you murder.*" And that's a really strong word, isn't it? And it's very possible that James of murder in a sense that Jesus spoke of it. You remember it? Because Jesus talked about how murder is more than just

killing someone physically, it happens in the heart. Let me show you this on the screen. It was from the Sermon on the Mount. He says:

Matthew 5:21-22 (ESV)

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment...”

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders (shall) will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to (that same) judgment...”

Because murder doesn't begin with the firing of a gun, or the stabbing of a knife, or the hitting of someone with a rock, or anything like that, murder begins in the heart. And that's, I think, what James is probably referring to. He goes on to say: *“²... You covet (and you know what that means. You want something that belongs to someone else) and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel (about it). (And) You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”*

I want to talk here, because in this latter part of verse 2 and verse 3, James talks about two elements or aspects, I suppose, concerning, you know, prayer and stuff like that. It's a common theme. And it happens when we get messed up by the world and we stop trusting God to meet our needs, we step out in our own strength to try to meet our own needs. And it makes a mess. And behind it all, are these issues of prayer that he brings up. And he makes basically two statements about prayer. Let me just show you these on the screen just so you can see them, these two statements that he makes. First:

Two Statements about Prayer

- You do not have, because you do not ask
- You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly

Now, that first one that you see there, *“You do not have, because you don't ask.”* That's just flat out prayerlessness, that's what it's talking about. And prayerlessness occurs usually, I mean, you can be prayerless just because you're lazy, but I don't know about you, but in my own life prayerlessness has occurred because I know better than to ask. I know that my desires are not in keeping with His will anyway. And so like, why ask, you know? Just to hear Him say no.

You know what? You remember when you were a kid, and you were dealing with your parents, you know? They say it's easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. And sometimes that is the cause of prayerlessness. We just know, deep down, that our desires, what we want, aren't in line with His will. So, and that's a lack of surrender on my part. That's just a lack of surrender, lack of obedience.

But the second statement that James makes about prayer is about those times that we do pray, but we don't get an answer. And those are very, very challenging, very frustrating times, I know. He says: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly...”* And the reason you're asking is that you might just spend what you would get otherwise on your passions. So, he's saying, and I know this is going to shock you, but he's saying that sometimes we pray with the wrong intentions. I know, I know, seems weird, doesn't it? That that could ever possibly happen. I'm joking.

You'd be shocked to know how many people never think to question their motives when dealing with unanswered prayer. I get a lot of questions from people about unanswered prayer. “Why won't God answer my prayer? I prayed and God didn't answer my prayer. I prayed and I prayed.”

And I get it. I know the frustration. I've been there. I've felt like my prayers were bouncing off the ceiling, and not going anywhere. And I know the frustration. But what's really interesting about it is that we are so quick, in fact, I find people are so much quicker to question God rather than to question their own motives, when it comes to unanswered prayer. We're quick. I mean, we're quick to say, “What's going on with God?” Or they question God's love for them, or they even, sometimes, question their own salvation. I get that one a lot.

And can I just stop here, for a moment, and tell you that is one of the most dangerous things you can do in your entire life. To allow your circumstances and the difficulty of your circumstances, and/or unanswered prayer related to the difficulty of your circumstances, to cause you to question your salvation. I know I'm talking to some of you. Not because you've told me anything, but because I've come to learn how common this is. We just, and I know I'm kind of getting a little off my text here, but this is a big deal. Don't go there. I'm imploring you. Don't go there. Do not question your salvation related to your circumstances, and do not question God related to your circumstances. That is the playground of Satan. I am telling you, he will get a hold of that faster than anything! He will jump on that. He will pounce on that! And oh, I tell you, and you will be in a tailspin.

You and I are to base our understanding of God's love on the Word of God. Not on our circumstances, okay? Very, very important. You go back to the Word when you start feeling even that temptation to think that God doesn't love you, He's not listening, He doesn't care, or whatever might come into your mind related to this. Or gee, maybe "I'm not even a child of God," you go back to the Word. You let that dictate your belief, not your circumstance. If you become what I call a "circumstantial Christian", you're going to be up one minute and down the next, and up one minute and down the next. Your life, in Christ, is going to be a rollercoaster ride. The only way to find stability is to find truth in the Word that supersedes your feelings.

I have to tell people almost every day, not to trust in their feelings. Almost every day. Your feelings will betray you. They will lie to you. Did not the Word of God tell you and me that the heart of man is deceitful? (Jeremiah 17:19) Doesn't it say that? Doesn't it say that in your Bible, that your heart is deceitful? Well, what if I said that about a person? If I said: "He's deceitful." What would you think? You'd think, "Well, I'm not going to listen to what he says, he's deceitful." Well, that's what the Word says about your heart! So, why are you listening to it?

"I just feel like God doesn't love me."

Yeah, that's that deceitful heart message going through!

"I just feel like God doesn't care."

And whenever you make a statement that starts with "I just feel..." kick it out, I'm telling you. Because that one's not going to get you anywhere. That is the deceitful heart speaking. I got way off my notes (Pastor Paul laughs), but for some reason...it's okay, right? Because I just felt like this was, you know, where we needed to go.

But I want to talk to you, this thing about prayerlessness, because as believers who approach God in prayer, we eventually learn, as we walk with the Lord, that asking God for things is more than just convincing Him, "God, I need this. I really need this, God." That's not what prayer is about. It's all about submitting our request to Him, and to His wisdom, and to His goodness, and trusting Him with the outcome. That's what prayer is about.

Don't you know that is the model that Jesus gave us and left us with? And yet, we struggle to do it. We beg and we plead with God, in prayer, never once

questioning our own motives and rarely submitting to His ultimate will. Look what Jesus said:

Luke 22:41-42 (ESV)

...he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

...he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, (you remember where this was? In the Garden of Gethsemane.) and (He) knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Why do you think Jesus prayed that prayer? Here's an interesting fact; Jesus was unable to pray wrongly, and yet, He still modeled that attitude for you and me. And that's sobering. He still modeled for us this attitude of submitting our prayer requests, surrendering them to the wisdom of the Father, so that we would learn from that. And it's this very lack of willingness to submit to God, that causes James to go on and say what he says in verse 4. Look with me in your Bible, he says, *"You adulterous people!"*

And, you got to remember, James is really, primarily, talking to Jews. James was the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and he dealt with Jews more than he dealt with Gentiles. And so, he uses a lot of Old Testament language. We're going to see that actually later in this chapter too.

But by referring to them as *"adulterous people"*, at times, do you know that we can do that with God? We can be adulterous with God. Because He's our, you know, He's our master, He's our husband, if you will. And, in the sense, we can be unfaithful to Him. And we're unfaithful when we refuse to submit, we refuse to surrender. We can be unfaithful to the Lord as believers! We'd probably be miserable about it, but we can still be that.

So, he says: *"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is (actually) enmity* (and, of course, the word "enmity" means "hatred". And again, this is strong language. He says it's hatred) *with God? (He says:) Therefore (This is the conclusion,) whoever wishes to be a friend of the world* (And that's what happens when we get our priorities all mixed up, and I start wanting the things of this world. And not wanting the will of God, and so forth. And that's, by the way, why God didn't answer my prayer because I didn't realize it. What I was wanting was of the world, not of heaven. And I'm sitting here, moping and doting, "God didn't answer my prayer." Good thing too

because He knew better! And James says, “Don’t you understand that your love and desire for the things of the world, actually put you in a position that is contradicted by the heart and the will of God? And you make yourself an enemy of God.

You make yourself an enemy by loving and longing for the things of the world. Now people, please understand, this doesn't mean that it nullifies your salvation. Doesn't mean you're all of a sudden going to hell. But you can put yourself, listen, we can do this in marriage. I keep bringing these things back to marriage.

You know, I can have an attitude toward my wife that actually creates more enmity than it does love. Doesn't mean we're not married at the end of the argument, or something like that, it just means that I was stupid, and I put myself in a position contrary to what I'm called to do: to love her as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25), do you understand? That can happen in marriage, it can happen in your relationship with Jesus. So, why is it that when we love the things of the world, we actually put ourselves in that position of hatred and an enemy, sort of a thing, with God? Well, here's why, 1 John chapter 5, verse 19:

1 John 5:19 (ESV)

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

“We know that we (believers) are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

This is, frankly, one of the most enlightening scriptures that you can really lay hold of. And it's a challenging truth to come to terms with, I'll grant you, especially for a new believer. But the world is the system of man's self-rule that says to God, “Get out of my life. I don't want You, I will take care of myself, thank You very much.” And it is, truly, a position of hatred with God. And so, you see, when we begin to love the things of the world, we put ourselves in that place, which is a very bad place to be, you know?

So, James goes on in verse 5 to ask, and this is interesting, *“Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?”*

That is an interesting question, isn't it? I have to tell you that in the Greek, it's a difficult question to translate into English, but the essence of what James is saying is that the Holy Spirit, that is now dwelling in you as a believer since you

came to faith in Jesus Christ, has a jealous yearning for you when you begin to show a love toward the things of this world. That's what he's saying. It's just like, again, if you have a marriage situation, if a husband or a wife begins to show a yearning for someone outside of the marriage, there's going to be jealousy.

Here's the difference though, don't think of God's jealousy as anything resembling our own, okay? Our jealousy is always very self-directed, it's very "me" oriented. You got to understand that God's jealousy comes from a heart of love that wants the best for you, because you know what, God doesn't need you. He wants you, but He doesn't need you. It's different in human relationships. I need my wife and I admit it. And so there's a very self sort of a directed thing in our relationship, but in God's relationship with you, He doesn't need you. He wants you. And His jealousy is pure. There's nothing sinful, or wrong, or bad, about God's jealousy.

He longs for you because He wants what's best for you. And that's what happens when we start having these flirtations with the world and we all have, and we all do, we start befriending the world. What happens? What's first? The Holy Spirit begins to convict, doesn't He? That's that attitude of God's jealousy. He says, I love you, you're mine (expressed in a loving way). And this is not the best in your life. These things are temporal, at best, and if you embrace them, they'll hurt you. And I don't want you to be hurt. I want you to have an abundance of joy, and peace, and grace, and this isn't the way to get it.

That's what the Spirit is saying to you and me, as He convicts us of those longings and desires of the world, that lay hold of us and so forth. And it can happen to anybody! Remember when Paul wrote to Timothy about one of the brothers, Demas? Who had more than a flirtation with the world. Let me show you, it's 2 Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:10a (ESV)

For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

And the underlying message of that is not just that he deserted Paul, but he deserted the Lord! Now, we don't know what happened to Demas in the end. We hope he returned. We hope Demas came back.

But there was obviously a time in his life, and this is the danger, when he liked the things of the world, and he began to be enticed by them and seduced by them. And he ended up walking away, he ended up deserting. And we don't

want to do that. And God knows that it's not going to be good for you; it's going to hurt, it's going to damage you, damage your relationships, damage you personally, damage the relationship you have with Him. And so, He's jealous for you with a jealous love, a pure, godly jealous love. Verse 6 says, *"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"*

And this is just a great, almost in the style of Proverbs, telling us, you know, that humility brings God's grace into our lives. Humility is my attitude to God that says, "All I need is You. This world offers a lot of pretty fancy, delightfully looking, and sounding, and feeling things to me, but all I really need is You." He says that then grace begins to be poured out into our life. But on the other hand, he says that if we pridefully go our own way, then there comes opposition.

So, you have your choice, you can have grace or opposition from God. Which one do you want? And now, the next verse, you'll notice verse 7, very widely quoted, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* Let's talk about spiritual warfare here, for just a minute, shall we?

I want you to notice that James says, *"Submit yourselves therefore..."* (emphasis on the word "therefore") Remember that word "therefore" is always key because it means, "In light of what I've said to you. Now, listen to this." So, in light of all the things that he's been saying up to this point, he says to you and me: *"Submit yourselves... to God."* And the interesting part about the first part of that verse, is that it's often left out, have you ever noticed that? I hear it quoted a lot where people say: "Hey man, *'resist the devil, and he'll flee from you.'*" And we quote that part of the verse, and we kind of lay it out there as a recipe, you know, for spiritual warfare. "Are you feeling attacked by the enemy? Hey, *'resist the devil, and he will flee from you,'* okay? Go." You know, send him off, you know?

Problem is there's more to it when it comes to resisting the enemy, and that more to it is the first part of the verse, it begins with: *"Submit yourselves...to God."* *"Submit yourselves therefore to God."* It's so important that we don't ever forget that because, people, spiritual warfare begins with submitting yourself to God.

If you don't get around to submitting yourself to God first, you're just going to be battling yourself (made with a whisper voice). Yeah! You're just going to be fighting against yourself. You got to get yourself out of the way so that you can really do that spiritual warfare, that battle, because you know, spiritual warfare

is real, but it begins with submit, submit to the Lord. We can't forget that little fact. I want to remind you of the definition of submission. We use words and we forget what they mean.

Submission:

the action or fact of accepting or yielding to... the will or authority of another person.

And of course, for you and me, that other person is God. So, when it says *"Submit yourselves...to God,"* it means to accept and to yield to His wisdom and authority, okay? And His will in our lives. And when we yield to Him and submit to Him, you put yourself in a much better place to do spiritual warfare and come away with a victory, much better place.

So, here comes James's conclusion to all that he's kind of been saying up to this point. He says, here's verse 8: *"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."* That is such a great verse. *"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."* I just don't feel close to God, I just don't feel close to God. Draw near to God. You draw near, and He will draw near to you. Right?

He says, *"Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."* He calls you wretched. And he actually says: *"⁹Be wretched (it's a good thing) and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."*

I think this is probably, these are interesting words, aren't they? They're very descriptive words, and I think the world thinks this is the way Christians should be going around all the time. Just kind of, we're gloomy and wretched. You guys never have any fun because you're gloomy. And that's not what he's talking about.

What's kind of interesting here is, again, remember James is speaking largely to Jews and so, he's really borrowing language that was reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets, when they would speak to the people about what goes along with genuine repentance. You know, we don't repent to God as we're skipping along and singing a happy tune, along with the Disney Channel. Repentance is a true coming before God with the passion of mourning, and grief, and sorrow, you know? Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. *"Blessed are those who mourn. For they shall (will) be comforted."* (Matthew 5:4). There's comfort, on the other end, of truly mourning over our sin, to the point where I hate this stuff, and I don't want it in my life anymore.

You know, that's why when he says "⁹*Be wretched...*", he's not talking about going around being wretched all the time. Because we're also told in the Word that we should be people who are rejoicing. But when I have sinned, when I've been convicted of sin, and the Lord has shown me this is wrong, I need to have the proper attitude related to repentance. And this is what he's kind of saying. There is a real genuineness to what he's talking about.

Now, as we get into verse 11, James gives us some rules for avoiding the kind of strife and arguing that he was addressing earlier. So he says here, in verse 11: "*Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.* (Now, your Bible may say: "*Do not slander one another.*" And then, he gives the reason why,) *The one who speaks against a brother or judges his (the) brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law.*" By the way, this is what I would expect someone to say if he's writing primarily to Jews. He would make reference to the Law, because they held the Law, you know, in very, very highest esteem, which we should too. But, I mean, with Jews, that's how they learned to read, by reading the Law. And it was like this is the essence of God's righteousness, you know? And to speak against the Law was a capital offense. So, this was huge to them.

So what does it mean to you and me? Well, don't slander one another. Don't speak evil against one another, because when you do, you speak against the very heart and righteousness of God. Look at Leviticus chapter 19:

Leviticus 19:16 (ESV)

You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we never said anything evil about anyone, ever? We'd have to abandon politics, as we know it, you know. Can you imagine? Here's what's really crazy, there's a world coming where this is going to be a reality. That's what blows my mind. I am so used to slander. I don't even hear it anymore. If somebody says something nasty about somebody else, kind of like, "Yeah, sure. They probably deserve it." That's the human heart.

The conclusion of this whole thing is at the end of verse 11, where he says: "...*if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.*" Yeah. You don't want to judge God's standard of righteousness as if, somehow, you know a better way. Because verse 12: "*There is only one lawgiver and judge,* (and you ain't it. That's the implication there. He says:) *he who is able to save and to destroy.* (That's the one who is the lawgiver and the judge.) *But who are you to judge your neighbor?*" So, leave judgments or words of judgment to God, and just know this, that all that bitter talk that we allow to come out of our mouths,

toward other people, is just giving voice to the enemy. Isn't that crazy? Isn't it crazy, people, that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit and give voice to the enemy at the same time? And it happens when we speak bitterly about other people, in a judgmental sort of a way. It never helps and it only hurts.

And then the final section of this chapter deals with a person's attitude related to making future plans. And I'm going to warn you here, James is really going to meddle in your life, right now, okay? So just fair warning. Verse 13:

“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.” I want you to stop there for just a moment. Let's put in language that might be a little bit more pertinent. *“¹³ Come now, you who say... ” “next year I'm going to start attending college at the university of blank, blank, blank. And get my degree so that I can make money, and live, and make a profit, and be comfortable.”* The same thing.

He says you don't even know what tomorrow's going to bring. And then he asked this important question, and this is something that every Christian has to ask, and this is something that parents should be telling their kids to ask. What is your life? What is your life?

See, we've all learned from the world, haven't we? What is my life? That's easy. It's mine. It's my life, it's my life, it's my life. It's my body, my choices, my rights. Right? That's what my life is. Can't believe you asked such a stupid question! No, it's not a dumb question at all from the standpoint of somebody who is a believer in Jesus Christ. Interesting that James asked the question, *“What is your life?”* It's the Apostle Paul that answers the question. Let me show you this:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

You know what the price was? The blood of Jesus. What is my life? No, it's not mine. That's what a Christian has to conclude. What is your life? It belongs to Him. He purchased it, on the cross, with His blood. My life is His. My life belongs to Him. And then in Galatians, good grief:

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This is kind of almost humorous, from the standpoint that if you said to the apostle Paul, "What is your life?"

He'd go: "What life? What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about your life here, on this Earth."

"Oh, that one died with Jesus on the cross. And whatever is left, whatever time He gives me to live out the rest of this life, on this earth, I'm going to live by faith. Give it to Him."

Wow! Galatians 2:20 is one of those passages, it's kind of like, every time I read it, there's like this chorus of angels going, "oooooooo," you know? There's this holiness about it that I can barely relate to. And yet, it's a goal and it's a reality that we need to embrace.

When I came to faith in Jesus Christ, the old life passed away, and now the new life has come, and the new life belongs to Him. It doesn't belong to me anymore. Even if it ever did, it doesn't now. It's His.

So, here's the conclusion. Verse 15: "*Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, (in other words, if God wants me to) we will live and do this or that.'*" He's saying that's the proper attitude of someone who is owned by someone else. Do you think a slave ever said, concerning his master: "Eh, I think I'm going to go over and work over there for your neighbor. I'll see you in a month or two, maybe." No! He would never dream of making such a statement because he belongs to his master. Not that I'm condoning slavery, the point is, we have a master who is Jesus Christ. He purchased us by His blood, and it's not ours to simply say: "I'm going to go do that, see ya. That's my plan anyway. God will just have to rubber-stamp it for me because that's the one I'm going to do, and there you go, you know?"

Do you know what that is? Look at verse 16: "*As it is, you boast in your arrogance. (And) All such boasting is evil.*" For me to say, "It's my life, I'm going to do what I want with it, and go where I want, I'm going to get whatever education I feel I need, I'm going to get a job, I'm going to make money, and I'm going to enjoy life."

He said, not only is that arrogant, it's evil. Now, we're talking about for a believer, okay? Don't go around telling unbelievers "You're arrogant and evil." They don't know any better. Bring them to Jesus first, then you can tell them they're arrogant and evil, I guess, if you have to. But the point is when we come

to Jesus, when we know Him as our Savior, when we know that we've been purchased by His blood, it ought to affect the way I live my life! It ought to affect where I go, what I do.

And then this final statement, *“¹⁷So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”* And I suppose you can connect that verse to what he's just been saying about boasting in our arrogance, you know, and pride. But he's saying that knowledge of right and wrong brings responsibility to do what God's Word says. And that it's just what Jesus taught. Let me show you, Luke chapter 12:

Luke 12:48b (ESV)

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

This is a spiritual principle that Jesus is talking about here, saying that when you know what is right, you're expected to do what is right, because you knew about it, and you don't have any excuse once you know about things. You know, with knowledge comes responsibility. I told you this was going to be kind of a beat-you-over-the-head kind of a chapter, didn't I? It's challenging, it's challenging. But there's some good things here to remember. Let's go ahead and stand together as we get ready to close. As always, if you need prayer, please come on up front so we can pray with you.

Father, we love You. We thank You for Your Word, even those passages of the Bible that are hard to hear, hard to listen to, hard to lay hold of sometimes. But Lord, You are so good, You're so good to speak to us and give us wisdom and understanding.

And Father, I pray that we would yield to You, Lord, surrender our lives to You more and more. Lord, I belong to You because You bought me with Your blood. And I ask You to forgive me for those times that I've become enticed by the things of this world and run after things that are not of You. And I thank You, Lord, that Your love for me will never be taken away. And I thank You for the convicting work of Your Holy Spirit, who speaks to my heart and says, you can do better, you can do better, because I am there to help you, to walk in victory. Lord, teach us what it means to submit our lives to You. We thank You and praise You, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And all God's people said together, amen.