



# Message **Transcript**

## Course Correction

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. Lord, we celebrate you and we thank you for the gift of your Son and for the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells all of us who believe. We pray, Lord, today that you'll be high and lifted up. And Lord, we're praying because we want to hear you and we believe, as a people, that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak, and so speak now, Lord, for we are ready to hear. So now, for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what He says and who will, by faith, put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, Amen. Amen.

There are times in life where we need a course correction. Oftentimes, this happens when we drive. We're familiar with GPS and you can be going somewhere and you plug in where you're going to go, and all of a sudden, it's like, take a left turn or hey, do a U-turn and turn around. And I remember when GPS was first coming out, I thought I was smarter than GPS. I've learned over time that GPS can see things that I can't see. And so when I'm asking the car, why would you have me turn there, there's a reason for it and we see it when we drive. Sometimes, we see it from other people and they tell us in life, we have a doctor that says you need to make a course correction on your diet and exercise. Or we have a financial planner that says you need to make a course correction in the way that you save so that you can be in the position you want to be at. We have people speak into our lives so we can course correct.

Oftentimes, airline pilots are listening to the control tower to see what course corrections they need to make. And they might tell the pilot, you need to circle around the airport a couple more times because there's no spot for you to land because they can see things and they're aware of things that the pilot's not aware of. And spiritually, it's true as well, that as believers in Christ, the moment you trusted Christ, God gave you a deposit of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, Christ in you, the hope of glory, who indwells you to guide you and help you to course correct so that you can continue to stay on the path for Jesus. And all of us need this. However, in our day, oftentimes, we think that the only important thing is that we turn from our sins and turn to Christ. And after that, it doesn't matter anymore. But the reality, the Bible would call that new birth. That's just when we turn to Christ to continue our journey with Christ. And when we're on our journey with Christ, oftentimes, the Lord gives us a course correction.

I believe that every time that the word is preached, as you know, when it's faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that God can speak to you. But there's certain messages I know are for everybody, because no matter where you are on your journey, I believe that God can give you a course correction. If you're walking intimately with the Lord and you're on track with Him and you seek Him and you're enjoying Him, perhaps today for you is an exhortation to, Hey, keep going. Perhaps, if you're just kind of floundering a little bit, maybe it's a course correction for where you need to take your next step of faith. Maybe you've just kind of wandered off and it's a rebuke to get you to turn around and Hey, come on back. Or maybe here, you're here

today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, but a GPS is a global positioning system. I think it's God's GPS. It is God's positioning system.

He knows where you are on the journey and He has the ability to speak to you right where you are and can help you to course correct. And today, we're going to do that by being in the Book of James in chapter four. We're going to look at the first 10 verses. I'll read these to us and then we'll unpack them together. But really, he's going to show us what we need to stop doing, what we need to start doing, and the benefit of what happens if we do the correction that God asks us to do. And so wherever you are today, my prayer is as you hear the word of God over you and you hear the word of God taught that you would hear the Lord for where you are and the changes you may need to make in order to continue with Him.

Hear what he says. He says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend it on your pleasures, you adulteresses. Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you not think that the scripture speaks to no purpose?"

He who jealously desires the spirit which He has made to dwell in us, but He

gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit, therefore, to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you."

And here nestled in those 10 verses, we hear God speak to us about how to course correct and what it looks like for us and how to know where we are on our journey with the Lord and how it is that we can enjoy God to the full and be used of God to the greatest measure. And he starts this by asking a question. This first point in course correction is this. If you're going to be going God's way, it's this. Stop stepping down the pathway of pleasure and pride. Stop stepping down the pathway of pleasure and pride. He's going to tell us what direction to stop going. Notice what he says by form of a question. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? What is the source of quarrels and conflicts? In the world, what's the source of quarrels and conflict?

Do you see anybody bickering? Is there any conflict in the world today? What's the source of that? And what's the source of quarrels and conflicts in your marriage or in your dating life? What's the quarrels and conflicts in your family and extended family? What are they? Where do they come from? You would even think that once you come to Christ, that stuff would be over. In church, there should never be any quarrels and conflicts, right? There's none at our church, is there? Has there ever been

a time where anybody at church has been like, man, I don't like them, or I'm going to sit over here and I'm going to have them sit way up there, and we're aware of where each other is, but we hope we never bump into each other ever. What is the source of that? Where does that come from?

He's going to answer that question. Here's what he says. Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? Your pleasure, it's where we get our word hedonism. It's what you want, when you want, how you want it, all those kinds of things. That's what you want, when you want it, how you want it. I like it this way. I like it that ... I think my world centers around me. That's where the conflict begins. All conflict starts internally. When we look around at the world, it's very easy to start blaming other people or groups of people and say, they're the problem of conflict. They're the problem of conflict. That's the problem of conflict.

But when you truly understand biblical revelation, when you see all the conflict in the world and you say, well, where does that come from? Here's what you should do. Me, inside of me, because there's a sin nature in me like there's a sin nature in everybody else that thinks that we know what's best for us when it's best for us, and we will gear our world for us in the way we want to for us and everybody else needs to accommodate us. We come out of the womb like that. We decide when we want to eat. We decide when we want to be changed. If it's the middle of the night, we decide when we want to cry and exercise. And it doesn't change as we age, it's a condition of sin in our lives that causes all of these things. All these factions happen because of the sin nature that's inside of us internally.

Wouldn't it be great if, at the moment of conversion, when you turn from your sin and trusted Jesus, your old nature just magically disappeared? Like you didn't know how to sin anymore. You didn't know how to be selfish. If you're around another believer, it was just bliss all the time. That's what heaven's like. It's coming. But it doesn't leave us here, does it? And so what he points out is, on the pathway, there are some of us even as believers that can still travel down that pathway of pleasure, that repentance to faith in Christ is just the beginning, it's not the end. Repentance is not, I'm walking this way, and oh my goodness, I need to turn around and look at God and then I'll keep walking whatever way. That's not repentance. Repentance is when I'm focused on this world and I'm going the way of the world and I decide to turn from my sin, focus on Jesus and I start walking His way.

Now, I may fall, I may stumble, I may occasionally turn around, but this is the general direction of where I'm going. I'm going God's way. He's asking the question, why is there so many quarrels? Why is there so many fights? Well, because it starts internally in you because you want to spend everything you have on your pleasure. You want to spend your life about you and the world will help you to do that. But notice what he says. It doesn't just stop with you. There's a war inside of you that makes you think that your life is about you.

When you go to a restaurant, you think it's about you and your food. When you go to a line at the store, you think it's about you and your time. When you're sitting in traffic, you think it's about you and your time. When you're in your family, you think it's

about you. We tend to think it's about us. And if we don't let the Lord change our heart, we can bring that into a marriage. We can bring that into a family. We can bring that into work. We can bring that into church where deep down we really think that all of these people and organizations exist to support our pleasures.

And if you think that way, there's always going to be strife, anxiety, and discord everywhere you go. That's what he's saying. It all starts with you. It all starts internally. But it doesn't stop there, because if it starts there, here's what he says. He says, you lust and do not have, so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. What's he saying? Now, lust, oftentimes we talk in the church where we talk to men and we talk about it in a sexual nature that you're going after something that doesn't belong to you. But lust is broader than just sexual, lust is broader than just a gender between men and women. Lust is trying to fulfill a godly desire in an ungodly way. It's trying to take something that doesn't belong to you, to fulfill something in your heart that God didn't give you. That's lust.

It can be lust after money. It can be lust after relationships. It can be lust after physical appetite. It's like I got to have this because I need this to feed my pleasures and I'll do whatever it takes to get that. Addiction would be the epitome of that, where it ultimately goes, where you cannot stop and you've got to have this because you're living for pleasure. And so lust means, I've got to have that and I'm jealous or envious of what you have. Because if my whole life is built on pleasure, here's what you can know, it's insatiable. There's no way to fill all of your desires. If you live for pleasure, you will never ever be satisfied.



And what happens is, if you live for pleasure, you'll start noticing other people that have some of the things that you're looking for. And guess what happens? Jealousy, envy, coveting. Why do they have that? Why do they get to live like that? How come they have that many kids? How come they're married and I'm not? How come they seem to live in a nice house and I don't? Why do they get a good job? How come people like them and not me? If it's all about pleasure, you'll always be comparing yourself to something that somebody else seemingly has and you want what they have and you'll do anything to get it. Because if life's about yourself, then guess what? You live your life to please yourself. So not only is there internal conflict where there's conflict with yourself, but there's external conflict and conflict with others, because you bring it into every relationship and every geography you're in because life's always around you and always about you, there's strife everywhere you go. And when you meet people like this, they're obvious. They're everywhere. Most recently at a rental car counter,. But they're obvious.

When somebody feels like the world is to revolve around them, they make it obvious to everybody else that the world needs to revolve around them and that's what's going on. So we seek pleasure and then we get to experience jealousy. And what does he say? He says, you do not have, because, why? You do not ask. Seemingly, who are you asking? God. You don't have what you're asking for because you don't ask God. Now, some of you don't have what you're asking for because there's no way you'd ask God because you know God doesn't want you to go after it. For others of you, you do not have because you do not ask because you're not asking

God to do it in the way that He wants it done. Because I know what some of you're going to say. I've asked God for this, I'm living the way God wants. I've asked God for a spouse. I'm still single.

I've asked God for money and I don't have a new job. I've asked God for this. How come God doesn't give it to me? You ever asked that question? Why is it that when I pray for somebody who's sick, they die, but when I heard somebody else at church pray for somebody who was sick, they were healed. I prayed, I asked, but it didn't happen, so don't tell me that I didn't pray. Don't tell me I do not have because I did not ask. I asked and God didn't give it to me. What's your answer for that? Next verse. You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives so that you may spend it on your pleasures. In other words, your hedonistic desires haven't left you so when you're praying, you're asking God to give you more pleasure in the way that He answers His prayers.

God, if you heal my mom, I'll feel better, so you better do that. God, if you give me a spouse, I'll feel better, so you better do that. God, if you give me more money, I'll feel better, so you better do that. And God knows because God's a loving Father that if He gives you what you can't handle or He gives you what's going to make you even more sinful, it's not a blessing, it's a curse, so He's not going to give it to you because He's so good that way. And some of us have been praying the same prayer for month after month, year after year, week after week.

Now, the Bible tells us to pray and not give up, but the Bible's also telling us,

check your motives. Why are you praying? Are you praying so that when God answers, you're satisfied, or are you praying so that when God answers, God's satisfied? Is it going to bring Him more glory? Would you ever pray a prayer that God, if you answer this and it causes me more pain, as long as you get more glory, answer that prayer? Or are you praying God, as long as it brings me comfort, as long as it brings me excitement, as long as it brings me joy, as long as it makes me look good to others, answer that? He says, you don't have because you don't ask. And when you do ask, you ask with wrong motives that you may spend your pleasures on yourself.

He says, you can pray selfishly. You can pray for the things of this world. And here's what you have, you have an enemy, the devil that's always whispering in your ear about several things, but one of the things he's whispering about is how can you experience more pleasure in this life? You shouldn't have to say no to that. You should be able to have that too. You should be able to take this. You should be able to get away with that. I mean, people don't understand, that's because they already have that. That's why they're saying that. All those things, and the devil whispers those lies and then the world's system promotes it. Not the world that God created, God created the world in love. God created human beings in love, but the world's system that lives for self is what it is. You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so you may spend it on your pleasures.

Here's what he says about us. You adulteresses. Well, what's an adulteress? Adulteress is one who wanders away from a covenant relationship to engage with another. He's not talking physically or sexually in this sense, he's talking spiritually in

this sense. It's the way he referred to Israel through the entire Old Testament. They had a covenant relationship with God and yet they wandered off over all these other gods. One of the gods we wander after in our culture is hedonism, it's pleasure. When we wander after other gods, then God sees us as spiritual adulterers. You adulteress. He asked the question. God asked the question, do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? If you live your life to satisfy your own pleasures, and that is your greatest goal, here's what you're saying through your behaviors to the Lord; God, I hate you.

God, I love me. I want this. I need that, and I need you to fulfill it. And when you don't, it makes me mad at you. That's what he's saying. Do you not know friendship with this world is hatred towards God? If you live 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120 years and you live totally for yourself, what is that profit you to gain the world and forfeit your soul? There's no advantage to you to live for yourself. And you can either choose to live for this world and yourself or you can choose to live for Jesus in the coming world that's coming soon to a city near you. You don't get to live both ways. You're on one road or you're on another. There's no neutral ground here. That's what he's talking about. Do you not know that when you live as a friend of the world, through your behaviors, you're demonstrating that you hate God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, he says, or of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. An enemy of God. You do not want to be an enemy of God. He's the first one you're going to meet when you pass from this world. You don't want to be his enemy. You want to be his friend. He's saying, don't live for this

world. Now, why is this so important? It's so important because we live in a culture that doesn't teach the gospel properly oftentimes, and here's what we tell people. Grace, grace, grace. It's all grace, don't worry about it.

Middle schoolers, I want you to listen up and I want you to listen to me really, really clear and really, really good. Just because your mom and dad are Christians and just because they drag you to church and just because you go to youth group doesn't make you a Christian. Just because you made a profession of faith or been baptized at our church doesn't make you a Christian. If there's never been a change in your heart or a change in your life that desires Christ and wants to forsake the world, I would question whether you've been converted or not. If you can cheat, lie, steal, watch terrible stuff on TV, do all this and you never feel conviction in your heart, maybe that's because the Holy Spirit is not resonant in your heart.

High school students, listen to me. Just because you come to church and your youth group and you're a leader and you lead a small group, whatever, but you're out sleeping around on the weekend and doing drugs and all these things like all your friends are, but you go to a Christian school too, doesn't mean that you're a Christian, right? If you can continue on in a pattern of sin and feel no conviction, you should be alarmed right now. You should feel terror on the inside.

College students, young adults. You could be coming to church leaving cadres, and yet what you're doing, you're shacking up and you're doing all these things that go against the Lord and you're not feeling any conviction, call yourself whatever you want,

but here's what I've discovered over the years. What I've discovered over the years is, personally experiential and in other believers, once the Holy Spirit is resonant in your life, yes, you can sin the sins you sinned before, but by gosh they're not nearly as exciting as they were and it makes you feel sick and you don't want to continue and you don't want to do it because you don't want to dishonor the one that you say that you actually serve. Please do not lie to yourself as a young person or a young adult or even a married person or middle-aged person, or I guess, I'm middle-aged, older person and just say, well, I'm better than most people and where I sin, God gives me grace.

That should never be the cry of your heart. What the cry of your heart should be is, when I sin, I should be placed in a place where I want to come back to God and get right because it doesn't feel good. Stop going down the pathway of pleasure and pride. If you're on that highway and you don't feel any conviction, you should feel terror in your soul and you need to give your life to Christ and you need to give your life to Christ today. Stop going down that path. And as a believer, here's how you should feel. That's me. I just don't know how to get out of it, we're going to get there, but this is what happens when we live for ourself. It puts God in opposition. He becomes our enemy rather than our friend. Let me give you just a three-part strategy of what we're talking about here just to sum it all up.

When you're on that pathway going that way, here's how it starts. It starts by, number one, seeking pleasure. I'm living for myself. I'm living for pleasure. Number two, because I am and I'm never going to be satisfied, I start to experience jealousy or

envy or I covet or I'm comparing. Here's how you know if you're doing that, by the way. If you can't celebrate others and what they're experiencing, you've got this disease. If you put people in categories and say, "Well, they shouldn't have that and they shouldn't do that, how come they get that?" You got the disease. Because if you're content with who you are in the Lord, you can celebrate anybody that has anything. Amen. I'm just telling you.

So here's what you're going to see. You're going to seek pleasure, you're going to experience jealousy and then you're going to commit adultery and I'm talking about the adultery of the spiritual nature where you're no longer in relationship, in this covenant relationship with God because you've gone your own way and you do not have because you do not ask. Look at all the promises that we have in prayer. There's so many, but I just wanted to highlight three. How about Matthew chapter seven, verses seven to 11. Ask and it will be given to you, Jesus says. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be open. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone does. And he who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who when his son asks for a loaf will give him a stone or if he asks for fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him? What does he say? Ask, and what, you might receive? Ask and you sometimes receive? Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. Because everyone who asks, seeks, and knocks gets an answer to their prayer, if, if

they're aligned with the Lord, if they're not seeking their own pleasure, if they want what God wants. You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, don't we pray for healing in this church?" A hundred percent, yes. "Pastor Jeff, wouldn't you want everybody to be healed on this side of heaven?" I would. "Well, wouldn't you pray that way?" Absolutely. "Does that mean everybody you pray for will get healed on this side of heaven?" Absolutely not. "Why?" Because God's in control and it doesn't change my mind about how good God is because He gets to choose whatever He wants to do. Amen.

It doesn't mean I can't ask for people to be saved, it just means they may not be. It doesn't mean I can't ask for God to right a relationship, it means that He may not. It doesn't mean I can't ask for a different career or a new job, He just may not. It doesn't mean I can't ask for ... I can ask for whatever if I'm rightly related to Him and He will answer. Here's the caveat. He just may not answer the way I want Him to and He may not answer in a way that's pleasurable for me. Have you ever had an answer to prayer where God clearly answered, but that ain't what I wanted? And actually, I'm in more pain now that I prayed about it than I would've been had I not prayed about it, but that's what God does. He grows us in that if we're praying His way.

What about this one? He says the same thing in John chapter 15 verses seven and eight. "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. My father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." Ask whatever you wish. If my word's in you, then I know how you're going to pray. You're going to pray according to my word. And if you pray according to my word, I'm going to answer it every time and you'll bear great fruit. But



can I just tell you something? In order to bear great fruit, you have to be pruned. You have to get cut back. When you start praying for fruitfulness, do not be surprised if hard times come your way. You asked for it. You asked for God to show His life through you, so what's He going to do? He's going to cut out all the stuff that keeps Him from showing off in your life.

Praying for more fruitfulness is not a prayer of prosperity. Lord, make me be more fruitful, make every day count, make me just be so excited. I'm praying for fruitfulness and I'm probably going to go through a trial, a temptation, a hardship, something that feels like I got kicked in the gut because it's what I prayed for and God's walking with me through it because He wants to bear more fruit in my life. You ask anything according to the Lord's will, He'll answer. He just may not answer your way. Or how about First John? It says the same thing. First John chapter five and verse 14 and 15. This is the confidence we have before Him. That if we ask anything, notice this, according to his will, He hears us. And we know that if He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked of Him. See, the key to prayer is praying according to what God wants.

God, is this what you want? Lord, when I'm praying for this, is this what you want? I've prayed for people before where as I've been praying for them, I sense in my spirit, this is not what God's having me pray for. It's okay. God, this may not be what you're choosing to do. That's okay. God, I'm comfortable with whatever you want to do as long as you're getting the greatest glory. When we come to God, we should

be telling Him, Lord, you answer this. This is how I see you getting the greatest glory, but if there's any other way that you would get greater glory than this, by all means, do it and you can do it that way even if it's not the way I want, because I want you to get more glory. That's how we pray. You pray like that, He always answers. He's like, you want to put me on display? I'll answer that. That's what I'll do.

Sometimes we don't see the answers to our prayer because we want to get put on display and we want to experience more pleasure and we want what we want and we want God to do that, and if He does it, we like Him and if He doesn't, we're frustrated with Him. But maturity says, you do whatever you want and I'm good with it. So here's what he says. If you're going to walk God's way, stop stepping down the pathway of pleasure and pride, stop it. But don't you love God's word? He tells us why. Notice verse five. In verse five, he says, "Or do you think that the Holy Spirit speaks to no purpose? He jealously desires the spirit which He has made to dwell in us." Here's the mystery of the gospel, Christ in you, the hope of glory. God is jealous for you. Now, here's what he's not jealous of. He's not jealous of you. He doesn't want what you have. He doesn't need your worship to be content.

What's He jealous for? I'm jealous for the relationship we could have. I'm jealous for what you could experience if you went all in with me. I'm jealous for how I created you. I'm jealous for you to experience the fullness of that, and my heart wants everything you are to be the full measure of everything I created you to be. It's why I sent my Son to be slaughtered on a cross and die and rise from the dead so you could have my very life in you. I want you to have all the life you could possibly have.

I want you to have life and I want you to have it more abundantly. That's what I want to give you. I yearn for that. Do you know that God cares more about your relationship with Him than you do? He wants it. He wants you to grow in it. He loves that about you. So he says, stop going down the pathway of pleasure and pride. Pleasure is what satisfies me. Pride is, I'm the center of my universe and both are keeping you from being your best, so stop doing that. But don't you love it that God gives us correction too? It's not just like stop it, stop it, stop it. Well, okay, I'll stop it, but what do I do?

He says this. Submit to God and experience His freedom through grace. Submit to God. Submit to God and experience His freedom through grace. Notice what he says in verse six. "But he gives a greater grace." Did you know that God gives a greater grace? Let me ask you this. Did you know that the amount of grace that you've experienced thus far is not all that there is? Do you know that there's more grace? See, we falsely have been taught that grace only happens at the moment of salvation, that it's unmerited favor. We didn't deserve to be saved. Totally true. And if we are saved, God did all the work. Totally true. But sometimes we falsely believe I already had grace. Now, I need to get discipleship and work on it.

No, the same grace that saved you is the same grace that needs to grow you. Did you know there's a greater grace? His grace is greater than all your sin. His grace can course correct, His grace can lead you down the pathway of the righteous. Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn shining ever brighter to the full light of day." God has pathways for you to walk in

righteousness that you never even knew. And really, James is saying nothing different than his half brother, Jesus, said in the sermon on the Mount. Jesus talked about two different gates and two different roads and two different kinds of trees and two different kinds of foundations and two different outcomes.

Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate for wide it is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many are on it, but narrow is the gate and small is the road that leads to life and few find it." Then He talked about two different kinds of trees, fruit-bearing trees and those that weren't. Then He talked about two different foundations, building on the sand or on the rock, and then He talked about two different outcomes, one of joy and one of destruction. James is saying the same thing.

Christianity is not a dot on a line of a religious activity that you did. "I prayed a prayer, Pastor. I got baptized, Pastor. I walked an aisle, Pastor. I professed Jesus with my mouth, Pastor." That's not Christianity, that's religion. Christianity is, I'm walking with Jesus. I used to be about me. Now, I'm about Him.

So if you're going to stop the pleasure and pride pathway, here's the pathway you need to start. Submit to God and experience His freedom through grace. Notice what he says. He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, he's quoting Proverbs 3:34. "God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to" who? The humble. Who is he opposed to? The proud. If you're going on the pathway of pride and the pathway of pleasure, it's not just that God is neutral standing by watching you do that and like, ah, shucks. God is opposing your path. He can't stand your path. He's not helping you on

your path. He's opposed to what you're doing. The Bible already said, if you're a friend of the world, then you're an enemy towards God. God's your enemy and He is opposing you. That's how He's treating you. You say, wait, but I got saved. If you're truly saved, then everything in your heart this morning would say, then things need to change. God, change me.

My wife and I have had this discussion many times about our early journey with the Lord and in a seasons of our lives where we had one foot in with Jesus and one foot in with the world and depends on where we were. You can kind of tell we were religious or if we were in Christian circles, they're definitely Christian, but there were other times, if you would've met us, I don't think they know Jesus at all. But I've told her many times, I didn't go to a church like this. I didn't have somebody speaking the word into my life and when they did, it broke me and I knew everything in me had to change and I didn't know how to change, but I knew Jesus could. And all I said was, "Lord, change me because I can't even change myself. Change the way I speak, change the way I think, change my actions."

And guess what? He does it. There's still a greater grace. He's still doing it. You know why? Because I'm not done. And while the Bible positionally says I'm perfect, my experience would dictate that I'm not quite there yet and so I'm still growing and so are you. I have to submit to God in order to experience the freedom that comes with that. Notice what he says in verse seven. "Submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you." How many want the devil to flee?

See, we think sometimes in church that if we just have a big prayer meeting, a lot

of worship and we dance around and get really excited and cast Satan out and bind him and loose him and all, then he's going to go away. That's okay, but if your behaviors are still going this way, you can sing and dance and shout and do all you want, but if your behaviors are going this way, it doesn't make any difference anyway. It's really just a worship service for Satan because he's like, I don't care what you say. I got you. You're going the wrong way. Here's what causes the devil to flee. When you submit to the Lord, that's putting yourself under the complete authority of God.

There's a term that many of the New Testament writers used. It was called this, slaves of Jesus. I mean a servant is one who is choosing to serve for a season. A slave is one that does not have a choice. A slave is one that is responsible for whatever the king says, whether you want to do it or not. Your answer is always, "Yes, sir. You said it, I'll do it." Now, if you're going to act like a slave of Jesus, you can't get much lower than that, right? You're going to humble yourself before Him. You submit to God. And it's the opposite of pleasure-seekers that make their life about themselves.

People who are submitted to God make their life about Him. It's what John the Baptist claimed, "He must become greater and I must become less. He must increase. I must decrease." I'm submitting to God. And a slave's attitude, before they even hear the command is, what? "Yes, sir." Whatever you're going to say, it's, "Yes, sir." I'm not checking my schedule. I'm not seeing if I have the resources available. I'm not deciding if I have enough time. I'm not even thinking about the command. If you say it, I'll do it. That's what it means to be a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the word of God says it,

I'm doing it. If the word of God says, don't do something, I'm not. If it says change something, I'm changing because the word of God has mastery over me. That's what it means to submit. When you submit to God, that's step one.

Step two is this, resist the devil. What's that mean? It means to violently oppose him. And it's not just your words, it's your deeds. When that temptation comes in, I'm not listening to temptation. When that trial comes, I'm not listening to all that woe is me garbage and victimization. I'm going to continue listening to the Lord. I'm going to reject everything that devil does in my life. I'm going to violently oppose him. I'm going to continue walking. Even though I'm walking through the valley of the shadow of death, I know there's light at the end of that tunnel and I'm going to continue walking and continue going, and I'm not listening to how this could fail or work or whatever. I'm listening to Jesus and I'm only going His way.

You submit to God and do it God's way and you violently oppose the devil, guess what? He'll leave you alone for a while, because what good is that? Now, it doesn't mean that he'll leave you forever. It doesn't mean that he's gone. I wish I could tell you that the more closely I walk with Jesus, the less I feel the devil. I would say the opposite's true. The greater steps of faith I take, and the longer I take them, the more vocal his voice becomes, the stronger the fight has to be, the more violent I have to become. And when I talk violence, I'm not talking physical violence. I can't beat the devil physically. It's spiritual violence. It's prayer. It's worship. It's the word of God. It's obedience. It's sharing the gospel. It's showing love and mercy to one another. It's all

those different things. Because, you see, if conflict starts on the inside and translates a conflict with other people, which puts us at odds with God, you see how it builds, right?

It starts internal, then it becomes external, and then it becomes eternal. And now, we're fighting against the God of the universe all over the place. And here's what he says. Stop doing that. Instead, why don't you submit to the God of the universe, resist the devil, and guess what? Violently oppose him, he'll flee from you. He won't have mastery over you. He won't be the one who's dictating what you do. And then, what's he tell you to do next? He really tells you to pursue Christ. Notice what he says in verse eight. I love this. I love this. I love this, because if you're feeling any conviction this morning, which I would kind of say, if you're not, you may not have the Holy Spirit inside of you. If you're feeling conviction this morning, you can sometimes hear the devil say stuff like this. See, maybe you're not a Christian. See, maybe ... But if you're feeling conviction, it's evidence that the Lord is doing something in your life and your obedience to that conviction demonstrates that you know him because here's what the devil's going to say to you.

Hey, listen, listen, listen. You screwed up and now God's mad at you and now He's not going to come after you and all this stuff. That's why I love verse eight. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Don't you love that? You come towards God, He's right ready to come after you. Remember in Luke chapter 15, the parable of the prodigal sons where the youngest son went away and squandered his stuff? He starts walking towards his dad. What's his dad do? Sprinting towards his son. I've been waiting for you. You're not too far gone. You haven't gone off the cliff. You're still



breathing. God still wants the relationship with you. Draw near to Him, He'll draw near to you. Isn't that a good word? You're not too far. You haven't sinned too much. You're not used goods. You're not too far away from God.

He's not like, oh, I loved you then, but now that you done ... None of that stuff. I love you just right where you are. Just come back. You draw near to me, I'll draw near to you. And then he tells us how we do it. He tells us how we do it. I love this, because in church sometimes we think that repentance is just cognitive. Yeah, I'm thinking I probably should get right. I guess I'll pray a prayer of repentance today, hope it works. Repentance may start in your mind, but it changes your whole life if you're genuinely repentant. I talk to people sometimes that will tell me somebody that's sinned against them greatly and they said they're repentant, so should I just trust them? I'm like, no. They need to bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

If they're truly repentant, they'll be repentant six months from now. If they're truly repentant, they'll be repentant a year from now. If they're truly repentant, they'll submit to any leadership and authority. They'll submit to the word of God. They'll do whatever because they know that they're wrong. That's submission. So submit to God, resist the devil. He'll flee from you. Draw near to God, He'll draw near to you. And then he tells you how to do it. "Cleanse your hands, you sinners." What's your hands? Your body, what you do, your actions. Stop sinning. Stop pushing the button on your remote control. Stop pushing the button on your computer. Stop hitting people. Stop being abusive with your hand. Stop it.

Don't use your bodies for evil. Don't use your bodies for sin. That's what he says.

Cleanse your hands. And what? "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." What's double-minded? That's the unstable people that are kind of in with God and kind of in with the world. Make a decision. Choose a side. And the side God's calling you to choose is Himself. You need to forsake the world and come to Christ. You need to be done with the things of the world and come to Christ. It's time to go all in. It's time to go all in. Does that mean you'll do it perfectly? No, but you'll do it increasingly once you make a decision. I'm going all in with Jesus whatever it means, whatever it means. I mean, the reason the prosperity gospel is such a bad teaching as it makes it about you. The problem with most prosperity teaching, it's about you. God's prosperity is always about Him, right? If you go all in with God, there's blessing to go all in with God, but then you hold it like this with open hands.

The devil wants to take you to high places and God wants to take you to high places, but when the devil takes you to a high place, you're clinging onto something that has to keep you there. When God takes you, it's like He can give, He can take away. It don't matter, it's up to the Lord. He's got this and there's freedom to get the devil off your back because God's grace is more powerful than that. See, sometimes we think of grace as just the grace that brings us to salvation in Christ, but it's more than that. Titus 2:11 through 13 tells us, "He gives us the grace to say no to ungodliness." He gives us a grace to grow us up in this lifetime. He gives us a grace to walk in His ways. That's grace. You want that grace? See, that's the grace you need after you get saved. It's not trying harder for God. How's that going for you?

Some people come to Christ, they're like, yeah, but I don't enjoy me reading my Bible and I don't enjoy praying. I don't enjoy sharing my faith and I don't enjoy tithing, and I don't ... Other people come to Christ, they're like, I'm reading my Bible. I'm praying. I'm sharing my faith. I'm tithing, but I don't enjoy it either. It's not about what you do or what you don't do, it's about your motivation for why you're doing what you do. I'm all about reading your Bible on a regular basis for the purpose of drawing closer to God, not for the purpose of information. I'm all about prayer regularly, but not for the purpose of religion, but for the purpose of drawing closer to God so He can draw near to you. I'm all about tithing, but not so that's a religious activity, but so that you're telling the Lord what's most important in this life seems to be money, and Lord, you're getting the first chunk of all of it and it's all yours because I want to grow our relationship and I want to trust you more with what you give me.

I'm all about evangelism, but not because I have to, because if I get back in my cadre, they're going to say, how many people do you share the gospel with? It's not about that. It's about because, Lord, you've saved my life and there are people dying and going to hell and I love you and you love them, and I got to tell them. It's the motivation. And some people, after coming to Christ, get really, really religious and some people get really, really, really grace-filled; oh, I don't do anything, but God's grace is good. And both are wrong. It's, I'm doing this because of God's grace because I want to grow my relationship with Him, and that's first and foremost in anything in my life. That's what he's saying. "So cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, you double-minded." Don't be double-minded, be all in with Jesus.

And then verse nine, which will not make itself on the motivational speaking circuit anywhere in North America. "Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom." Praise the Lord. Now, why does he say that? Why does he say that? Because there's a gift of repentance. The puritans called it the gift of tears, that the closer you draw to the God of the universe, the one who is an unapproachable light, the one in whom there is no darkness at all, a couple things happen simultaneously. One thing that happens is, you're going to see your sin in greater measure if you draw near to God. He doesn't have any sin. There's nothing wrong with Him, and He's an unapproachable light, so the closer you get, the more exposed you're going to be. But what happens simultaneously with that is the closer you get, the more love you're going to realize that God has for you and how much He loved you by sending His own Son and how you were never good enough for Him and how He still is extending measures and measures of grace.

I remember one of the first times this happened to me after becoming a Christian where I was doing a devotion just like any other day, and I was reading through the word and God just began to reveal to me how apart from His grace, I was capable of sinning every sin I'd ever read about in the newspaper or seen anybody else do and it was His grace that had kept me from that. And it was so deep and profound, I just began to weep and I wept for about an hour of God, you spared me from all that. I thought it was because of my choices. I thought I was a pretty good person. And He's like, no, I'm a pretty good God.

When was the last time you wept over your sin? Not when's the last time you

said, yeah, I was wrong, God, I shouldn't have done that. I'll try harder. That's not repentance, that's lip service. Repentance is, Lord, I've done this and I don't even know that I feel like it's wrong. I am not even feeling anything, but Lord, I want to keep walking with you and I want you to show me it's wrong, and I want to start to love what you love and I'm going to start to hate what you hate. And Lord, would you change my heart in that process, because clearly, I don't have the ability to do it. And as you walk closer to Him, He will break your heart. You'll see that you're the problem. And as He breaks your heart, you'll also experience a measure of His love you didn't even know existed.

The longer I walk with the Lord, the more I'm convinced there's nothing good in me. I'm a hundred percent convinced of that, and when you really believe that, you can love everybody. You can see people that are out there that are so different and so radically opposed to God and you're like, man, I love him. I know who I was. Apart from the grace of God, that's what I would do. You see the world differently. So he says, stop seeking yourself and stop seeking your pleasure and stop living with pride and submit to God and experience His freedom through grace. Just to sum it up, if seeking pleasure, experiencing jealousy, and committing adultery is the wrong way, then here's the right way. Submit to God, oppose the devil, and pursue Christ. Submit to God, oppose the devil. That means violently oppose him and pursue Christ. Reorient yourself with the Lord. Get that thing right.

Now, if you do that, there's reward, because I want to tell you how you can start

seeking. Notice what he says next. This in verse 10 tells us the final step. He says, "Seek the honor that results from humility." Seek the honor that results from humility. Here's what he says. "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you." Now, Pastor Jeff, you've been talking for 45 minutes. It's not about us and we're not to seek honor. We're not to do all this." I'm like, you're exactly right, but I didn't say seek honor for yourself. I said, seek the honor that comes from the Lord. When you're submitting to God and you're resisting the devil, here's the honor you're seeking. God, I want to know that my life counted for you. I want to know that whether you take me out of this world today or you leave me for another a hundred years that it counts for you. I want to know that you get all the glory. I want to know that you get all the honor. I want to know that you get all the praise.

Seek that kind of honor because that kind of honor comes with eternal rewards. And there's nothing wrong with seeking that kind of honor. You remember in Matthew's gospel after Jesus told His disciples for the third time that He was going to be crucified, die, and rise from the dead, and nobody was paying attention. As a matter of fact, the mother of James and John came up to Jesus and said, Hey, I got a question for you. Yeah. When you come into your kingdom, can John sit on one side and James sit on the other, because that'd be really cool with me as a good Jewish mom. And it says that the other 10 became indignant. You know what indignant means? Ticked, because you know what the other 10 were thinking, they're taking my seat. I want to sit on the right and the left. And Jesus does not rebuke them for wanting something great.

He tells them it's His Father's decision as to how those things are going to be played out. But He called His disciples and He says, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and their great men exercise authority over them, but not so with you, but whoever wishes to become great ... In other words, if you wish to become great, I have no problem with that. Whoever wishes to become great shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you, shall be your slave. Just as the son of man, the one you say you worship, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Here's what Jesus said. You want to be great, I love that you want to be great. You want to be great, serve. Find somebody else and preference them.

Where do I find that? Open your eyes. In every relationship, consider other people more important than yourself. All the one anothers, 50-plus in the New Testament, preference other people. You want to be great, do that. You want to be great, live to make other people's life better. You want to be great, serve. You want to have a great marriage, serve. You want to have a great dating life, serve. You want to be a great student, serve. You want to be a great leader, serve. You want to be the greatest, be a slave. You just lay down. You let people walk over you, let them do whatever because you're not special. You're just living for Jesus. And the more you walk His way, what difference does it make how people treat you? Blessed are you when people say all sorts of hurtful mean things about you. Your reward in heaven will be great.

See, greatness is not a pyramid that you climb to. Greatness is submitting to

God and going downward to serve others. And the only way you can do that is if you have a relationship with the Lord. That's where the God of the Bible tells us we need to live. That's where we know where we're on this journey. You say, "Well, how does that happen?" Let me tell you, it happens at the cross. Because see, sometimes when people hear this sermon, they start pointing fingers. If you're listening to this sermon today and the thought in your head is, oh my gosh, I wish my neighbor could have been here today. They totally needed to hear this. Or, my husband couldn't make it, I'm going to make sure, when's this go up online? He's going to listen. He needs to hear. If you're pointing fingers, you're missing out because finger pointing is what the Pharisees did. Every time Jesus taught, they're always pointing fingers on what He did wrong.

God doesn't want us to point fingers. What's He want us to point? Thumbs. When David sinned, he said, Against you, and you alone, Lord, have I sinned and done what's evil in your sight." Paul said, "Among all sinners, of whom I'm the worst." I mean we hear a message like this, we can point fingers and be like, well, I'm better than so-and-so and they should be really ... or we can point thumbs and we can say, "God, what do you having me change? And how do I walk with you?" And where people that point thumbs meet up, it's at the cross. Because at the cross of Jesus, that's where God's holiness, His righteousness and truth pair with His love, mercy and grace. That's where His standard of righteousness is set that you can never attain. But His standard of mercy and grace is like, wherever you are, I'll take you right now.

That's the beauty of the gospel. It's not listening to this message and saying, "Oh my goodness, this is so weighty. I got to try harder now." You can't try harder now.



You can't make yourself a better person. If you're an angry person, you can't change your anger problem. If you cause strife everywhere you go, you can't change that. If you're depressed all the time, you can't change that. But I know somebody who can, and if you will submit to Him and resist the devil, the devil will flee from you. You'll draw near to God, He'll draw near to you. And your greatest joy will be bringing God the greatest honor, because when you bring Him the greatest honor, you're the most fulfilled in your life. Don't you love how God loves us? Don't you love how He sees right where you are on your journey? Don't you love how He knows right where you are and loves you enough to either rebuke you, to challenge you, to course correct you, to exhort you and encourage you because He wants you to continue to walk in His way.

So here's my question. If you're ready to point thumbs, matter of fact, why don't you just do that as I'm praying? You point the thumb at you and I'm going to pray over you.

Father in heaven, we hear this message and I say, and we collectively say, it's me. I know it's me. Lord, it's so easy to want to blame others. It's so easy to say where they're wrong. Lord, it's hard to look in a spiritual mirror and say, no, Lord, you got me. It's me. Lord, today, change my heart. Lord, as I draw near to you, change my desires. Lord, make me love what you love and show me to hate what you hate. And Lord, help me to take one step closer to you. And Lord, as I draw to you, will you draw near to me? You promise me that you will. Lord, align my life more with you. Father, I give you all the glory. I give you all the honor, and I give you all the praise. Change my

life. Lord, let me praise your name. Be enthroned on my praise, God, not only in this generation, but for the generations that come after me because of the way that I lived for you.

Lord, I know I'm not perfect, but I also know that your love for me is so immense and it's greater than all my sin. God, I give you all the glory. I give you all the honor. I give you all the praise for who you are and for all that you're going to do. And it's in Jesus' name, I give you praise. Amen and amen. Could you stand as we sing and we praise the Lord today?