Whosoever Will 11-1-26

Well, good morning. We're going to be looking at James chapter four today. Just when you think there's nothing left that James can step on our toes about, he finds something new, something else to fuss with us about. So we're talking about grace and humility today, two great attributes for a Christian to have. The scene kind of shifts here as we get to this. We've been talking about outward conduct, conduct that people can see, how we relate to people, how we treat people. We talked about. Face and place and race as being our criteria for people, but now James is beginning to look more at the spiritual problems that may have some bearing on these outward evidence as we see of our salvation. From what can be seen on the outside, we're going to go to what can be seen on the inside. Basically, it's a heart problem. We've already talked about how this church that.

James is writing to was fussing and squabbling among themselves. There were some that wanted to be teachers. There were those that were confused about this new Christianity. They'd come out of a Jewish background, and they were arguing about whether they should be keeping the law or not. So there was much confusion and squabbling going on. We don't know which church this was that the letter was originally written to. Usually, the letters were circulated to other churches later, but, James seems to have a church with a problem in mind as he's writing this letter. There are, of course, always squabbles and fusses within churches. That's just human nature. I was reading as I was researching this and found some actual documented things that have caused churches to split in the past. One was the pastor grew a beard without asking permission.

They built a playground that butted up against the church cemetery. The clock was removed from the back of the sanctuary. The kitchen served canned green beans on Wednesday night instead of fresh green beans, and lastly, somebody brought coffee creamer to be served that looked like it was in a liquor bottle. So, as foolish as all of these things seem. They are probably no more foolish than other things that have split other churches through the years. So James is going to get into why do we fuss and squabble? We're Christians, and it just ought not to be. So James was hearing foolishness about like these things we've just named off about this church that he is writing to, and the implication is that some of these people had been members of his church in Jerusalem. Remember he.

After he was saved, he became the pastor, the leader of the the mother church in Jerusalem. And some of these people had been members of that church before they were scattered by the persecution that came late in the first century. These squabbles were leaving the church house, and they were spilling over into the community, into businesses, to families, even into marriages. And James is asking the question, "Did I not teach you?" Better than this? Are you not above this type of behavior? So he starts in the first part of verse one and says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" He he jumps right in. He doesn't have a little salutation like he's had in the past. He's not calling them brothers and sisters here. They are

acting like worldly, unsaved people, so he's not calling them brothers and sisters anymore. Why are you fussing in God's house?

Is the question that he's asking them, and you know we all know that being Christians doesn't exempt us from worldly problems. The Bible is full of examples of good godly people that went astray. They let the things of the world creep into their lives. We've talked several times about the problems between Lot and Abraham. Abraham, a man living by faith; Lot, a man living by sight. The disciples were constantly fussing among themselves about who was going to be the greatest in heaven. Paul had to write several letters. One to the Corinthians, there they were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. They were taking one another to court. When he wrote to the Galatian church, they were sniping and biting at each other. They were being Christian cannibals. He wrote to the Philippian church about two women who were in the church and feuding. So.

Christianity, being a being a Christian, being a church member, does not exempt us from worldly problems. Even in Jesus' last night on earth in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed this. He said, "I pray that they may all be one, be of one accord, be of one mind, just as you, Father, and I are, I in you and you in me." This was John seventeen twenty one. But that was his concern that there would be harmony, there would be peace among his people after he was no longer physically with them. The latter part of verse one, he goes on and says, "Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body parts?" So he asks them a question, and then he immediately answers it. Of course, deep down, we all want peace. We want peace in our own personal lives. We want peace at home. We want peace at work. We want peace at church. We all want to go back to that.

Perfect Garden of Eden situation. The Bible uses the word shalom to describe peace, so we all want to go back to shalom. And the word that the Hebrews translate here, meaning peace, has a deeper meaning than just the absence of conflict. It implies wholeness. It implies completeness. Some places it's used to imply health or safety. Just as the absence of—it's not the absence of fighting among them like they were doing in this church—but it was a state where everything is fully mended, balanced. It's lacking nothing. They are walking with the Lord. They are peace with one another. But that's a problem we rarely ever solve. We always are looking for more peace, for deep inner peace. The Bible says it's a heart problem.

That we are conflicted, we are what James calls double-minded. We have one foot on earth and one foot in heaven, and we are constantly battling between the two. As Christians, we know the right thing to do, but we let the things of the world creep in. We let worldly things affect our decisions, our speech, our actions, where we go, and what we do. Our new nature keeps wanting to do good, but our old nature constantly fights to have its own way. So deep down. We really kind of always want to do it our way, and that's not always God's way. Verse two, he says, "You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and you quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask." The first thing he talks about here is lust.

And lust here, the word that he's using, is not really talking about sexual pleasure. It simply means desire. The implication is anything that's contrary to God's will for us, anything that does not honor Him. The body in itself is not evil. It is the nature that is within the body that can be evil. It can take the body over and make the body do things that are displeasing to God. Next, he talks about murder. It is not actual murder like we think of it on TV. James is using it here as a hyperbole for sin, for even uncontrolled anger. In Matthew chapter five, Jesus talking in the Sermon on the Mount prohibited even the intent to murder, to be so angry you could kill somebody. But sometimes it it could be actual murder.

But when we don't get our way, we murder. Sometimes it's a tale as old as time. It's always been around. It's as true as it can be. Go back to the beginning. Go back to Genesis chapter one. In Genesis chapter one, we had creation, God's perfect creation. Everything was just as God intended for it to be. Chapter two, man sins, and perfection is lost. Chapter three: Cain and Abel come before God. Cain doesn't get his way. Chapter four, page four. I'm sorry, page one is creation. Page two is man's sin. Page three is Cain and Abel. But page four in the Genesis story is Cain murders Abel. It didn't take mankind but four pages into our story to commit murder. He uses the expression "quarrel" here. He says, "You want what everybody else has."

He says, if Roger has two, has three candy bars, I want two. He wants two. We got a quarrel on our hands. Everybody wants their own way. And he says, lastly, you do not have. He says, you covet, but you don't get what you are coveting. You ask amiss. You do not ask within God's will. So what should you do? Well, the Bible says that we kind of have. Two choices: we can go down the path of anger, bitterness, resentment, or you can ask for God's help. We tend more often to not ask for God's help. We want to do it our way, and it usually doesn't end well for us. But when we pray, when we ask, the sin, the disappointment goes away. We seek God's will, but then we have to follow God's will. It's not enough just to know God's will.

You've got to be willing to do it, and of course we've talked many times in here about the fact that if you do not have an intent to do God's will, He has no obligation to reveal it to you. That there's got to be a willingness on your part to follow His will in order for Him to reveal it to you. So, verse three, He says, "You ask and you don't receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend what you request on your pleasures." You do not receive. We ask amiss is what he's saying here. We ask God selfishly for things. We ask for our own way. We ask for things that are not within God's will for us. We ask with the wrong motives. I think it would be interesting if we could go and God would play back our prayers to us and let us listen to what we actually say when we pray. And I think we would find many times.

Our prayers are filled with me, I. God loves our prayers. He wants to hear our prayers, but not when we pray selfishly. Not when we come home angry and pray that you'll squash them like a bug. That is not the type of prayer God wants to hear from us. He gave us a model prayer. We need to go back to that model prayer and look at it frequently because we are forgetful. We are human. If you go back and look at the model prayer, He says. In Your name,

Your kingdom, Your will be done. You, God's way, not me, my way. When our prayers become selfish, God has absolutely no obligation to answer them. He knows our hearts. He knows our intents even better than we do. So sometimes we pray, thinking we are praying not selfishly.

But God sees the intent of what we're going to do if that prayer is answered. So it needs to be in His will, in His way. That's always the best place for us as Christians to be. You know, we talked a few weeks ago about when we were how we tend to take nouns and turn them into verbs. So this is one of those cases. We need to start adulting. We need to start growing up. We need to grow as Christians. Verse four, he makes more accusations. He says, "You adulteresses." Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. He uses the word adulteresses here. We are the bride of Christ. We should be faithful to the bridegroom. But we're living in our dirty world. We're living in a world filled with sin, and it's difficult.

To be that perfect bride of Christ, sometimes we commit the same sins that God that God accused Israel of. They were His chosen people, but they were constantly going after foreign gods and idols. They were prostituting themselves. They were being adulteresses. They were not being faithful to the King. He says here, "Get over it." Luke fourteen tells the story, of course, of the prodigal son and how he squandered his wealth and. Sometimes that's how we treat God, like the prodigal son. He blesses us. He gives us all kinds of good things. He brings them into our lives. We squander them. We waste them. We waste them on our own selfish desires. We don't use them as wisely as we could. The answer to the problem is that we should love God and not the world. The world is passing, but God is eternal. God is always going to be there, and things are always going to be.

His way in the end. Verse five, he goes on and says, "Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose? He jealously desires the spirit whom he has made to dwell in us, but he gives a greater grace. And therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' If you go Google this to find out exactly where this Scripture came from, you're not going to find it." It is not actually in the Bible. It is a composite of several Old Testament teachings. It relates to the age-old battle between the flesh and the spirit. We know the right thing to do; we just don't always do the right thing. God gave us the spirit, as James mentions here, to be our moral compass to keep us on track.

When we displease God, we have that little nagging feeling deep down inside that we have indeed displeased God. He loves us so much, but He wants all of us. He has given us all of Him, but now He wants all of us in return. He wants us to be transformed, not conformed, as the song puts it. Oh, how He loves you and me! Or His grace is greater than all of our sin. We we sing that, we talk about it, but do we actually believe? That it is possible for him to overcome all of these things in our lives that are displeasing to him, and it is when we are in his will and doing it his way. Verse seven, another word here: submit. Submit, therefore, to God, but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Submit. It's a kind of a military term. It means to serve under. It means

like being a soldier in the army. That you're always going to have someone of higher rank above you.

It's also a picture of a slave in the master's house. That the master is the one that you submit to. So he's saying here that there can be victory in Jesus, but it requires unconditional surrender in this spiritual warfare. Don't debate the devil. You're not smart enough to do it. Don't negotiate with Satan. You're never going to win. He's always going to outsmart you. Now Jesus resisted the devil in the wilderness, and he really did flee from him. And how did Jesus do it? He quoted Scripture, and that's a good advice for us too. That when the devil comes knocking at the door, we need to be able to quote Scripture. We need to hear it. We need to understand it. We need to memorize it. That way, when Satan does come knocking on our door, and we are going to resist him using Scripture, you really don't want to say.

Could you wait just a minute? Let me go get my Bible. I know there's something in there about this. We need to know God's word and able to fight Satan with it. Verse eight: Come close to God, and He will come close to you. Cleanse your mind, your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. So He's told them they need to submit to God, and then what comes next? He says the next thing you do is after you submit. You come close, you draw near, you have communion with God. It's like two old friends having a comfortable conversation. It is prayer, and that's all that prayer is: is a conversation between us and our heavenly Father. It's not going to him with our grocery list of wants. We need to do pray. God wants to know what's on our hearts, but we sometimes forget we also need to be still, be quiet, and listen to God.

We complain sometimes that God does not hear our prayers, but it's because we don't stop and listen for the answer. We make a quick, hasty prayer and dash out the door without waiting for the answer. It may not come immediately. It may not come in the form that we want it, but there always will be an answer. But sometimes we have to be still and listen in order to get that answer. And remember too, that prayer is like talking with a comfortable old friend. God is never going to say to you when you come to Him. Oh no, not you again! He's never going to say seriously, "Did you do that again? Haven't we already talked about this?" That is not how God deals with us. Remember, God forgives and forgets. We are the ones that cannot forget. He uses the word "cleanse" here. Basically, it means clean up your act, purify yourself. He talks about the hand and the heart. The hand is external; it's something we can see. Therefore, he's talking about the deeds that we do.

The works, the things that we do to honor God, He says the heart, the heart you cannot see. It is an internal thing, and that means He's talking about our motives. What is behind the acts that we do? When we help someone, are we doing it to glorify ourselves, or are we really doing it to help that person? Are we making sure that somebody else is watching before we do a good deed? God knows our motives. He knows the intent behind the things we do, and I think. More often than not, our intent is not as good as the deeds that we do. He talks about double-minded. That's something that we have talked about over and over again. Conflicted, conformed instead of transformed. One foot

in heaven, one foot on earth, and we don't know which way to go. We say one thing, we do another. We say I love God, but then we give in to Satan and his desires. We seem to love Satan sometimes more than we love God.

Verse nine, he says, "Be miserable, mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Miserable, mourn. Be truly sorry for your sin, not just flippantly. Oh well, I'm sorry I did that. We talked about last week the idea that when you apologize to somebody. Be sincere. Sound sincere. Don't make it sound like, well, I did it, but I'm so much better than you. You wouldn't understand. It's not like that. Be truly sorry when you go to God. God always understands. You don't need to explain it to Him. He knows what you did and He knows why you did it. The Bible says, be grieved, be broken hearted, that you really are sorry. Don't laugh about your sins. Don't brag about getting away with them. Don't dismiss them lightly.

That is not the attitude that God is looking for. So He says, "Be miserable," but He also says to humble yourself. It implies to weep about your sins, to be brokenhearted about them. It implies confession of them. Tell God, "I did this." He already knows it. He wants to make sure you know that you've done wrong. Turn from them. That's what repentance is. That's a 180 degree turn. You walk away from it. You turn your back on it. A lot of people would tell you today that humble has become the new pride. People are very proud of their humility. It is like saying, "Thank you for this award, which I so richly deserved." Mary likes to tell people that I once got a award for humility, but they took it away when I bragged about it. So, the way in God's kingdom to be up is to go down, to humble yourselves, to submit to God.

And remember, none of us are ever smart enough to argue with Satan or to to debate Satan. So don't go in that direction. Verse eleven: Do not speak against one another, brothers and sisters. The one who speaks against a brother or sister, or judges his brother or sister, speaks against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one lawgiver and judge, the one who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you judging your neighbor? Oh, judging—that's something that the Bible has a lot to say about. James says here, "Do not speak." It is in the ongoing tense. It is stop whatever you're doing right now. Stop doing it and quit doing it.

And then keep on not doing it, and particularly he's talking about our speech here—that our speech should be honoring to God. And it's not just right now, but it's till the end of our lives that we keep on speaking, keep on not doing the things that displeases God. He's going back to this double-mindedness to how this war among not only ourselves but us and other people. He says, "Quit defaming one another. Quit." Putting one another down. Don't make careless, derogatory marks remarks about a brother or sister in Christ. Certainly, no malicious gossip. Never is that acceptable. Our speech should always build up, not tear down. Don't let your speech make you look superior to others. We talked a couple of weeks ago about the idea of when you tell someone that you pray, you will be praying for them.

Don’t make it sound like your prayers are so much more superior than their prayers that you will pray because their prayers are so ineffective. That’s always, always unacceptable. He talks about becoming judges. It’s the idea of comparing yourself to other Christians, not to the to the lost out there, but to other Christians, especially those that you consider inferior. They’re not as spiritual as you are. This was one of the Problems with the scribes and the Pharisees—they were so much better than everyone else. They could not relate to anybody but themselves. Judge the law. God specifically addressed this problem in the Mosaic law: Do not set yourself up to judge others. You are putting yourself above the law. That you know more about the law than they do.

You are putting yourself in God’s place because the Bible says He is the only righteous judge. So do not become a judge. Do not judge others because you are setting yourself above the law. And then He talks about the lawgiver, and of course, the lawgiver is God. He not only wrote the law, but He also is the one who enforces the law. He alone decides who will be saved and who is not going to be saved. His decisions are fair. They’re holy. And they are final. God never changes His mind. Frequently, you will hear the Bible say that God relented or God repented of doing something. It doesn’t mean that God changed His mind. It simply means the situation was such that He did not have to do what He had threatened to do. Who are you to dare to assume the role of God? Again, this is going back to the scribes and the Pharisees. They set themselves up on pedestals. They set themselves up as the standard.

For the law, they did things to make the little people admire them. They made rules that they were sure only they could keep. And then, when Jesus came, of course, he tore down all of these pedestals that they had set themselves up on. He exposed them for the frauds that they really were. That is why they hated him so much. That’s why they wanted to kill him, is he had totally destroyed the way of life that they had established for themselves. But it was established totally outside of God. They had religion. They had no worship of God. All they had was false religion. Verse thirteen. He says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today, tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” What? What a.

Incredible description of our mortality—that we are like a vapor; we’re just going to poof and not be there anymore one day. It is the ultimate arrogance, planning your life as if you were in control of it. You are not; God is. James is not condemning planning, running a business effectively, making plans to travel or to do something good for somebody. There’s nothing wrong with those things. But it is wrong when you do it without consulting God first. Should I go into this venture? Should I be dealing with this person? Would it be beneficial if I went to this place? These are the types of questions that we sometimes forget to ask. But at the very best, life is a mystery. We don’t know who done it, so to speak. The physical universe obeys God, but His creating, breathing created beings just don’t seem to be able to do it.

You will have much less frustration, much less stress when you include God in your plans. Do not arrogantly plan your life, because He says here, “You do not know.” We have no idea what tomorrow will bring. We don’t even have any idea what this afternoon will bring. Life for us is not a when, but it’s an if. If it happens, if it comes. There may not be tomorrow. There may not be this afternoon. Life is indeed a vapor. He says that what he describes here is like a puff of smoke in the wind. You see it for a second and it’s gone. It’s like your breath in the air on a cold morning. It’s there and then it’s gone. And life is just that brief. It is just that fleeting. We always count our lives in years. We celebrate birthdays and.

The older you get, the more you pump your chest about. Well, I outlived so and so, but Psalm 90, verse 12, puts a different spin on it. Psalm 90, 12 says, “To number our days, not our years. We only have days in God’s eyes.” The Bible says, “In eternity, ten thousand years is going to be like a day. We will have only just begun.” So instead of counting our years, count the days that we have. They are. Dwindling as we speak. Remember the parable about the rich, arrogant farmer that had so much he didn’t know what to do with it. So he decided he would build bigger and better barns. And of course, his problem was that he was arrogant. God had given it all to him, but he kept saying, “I, I, me, me.” And what happened to him? He died before he got to enjoy those new barns. Verse fifteen. Instead of all of this planning about tomorrow, he says, “Instead, you ought to say, if.”

The Lord wills; we will live, and also do this or that. But as it is, you boast in your arrogance, and all such boasting is evil. One writer put it this way: Man proposes, God disposes. We cannot see the future, but we know who controls the future. We know who holds every day in His hand. It is foolish for us to disobey the will of God. To know the will of God and then to purposely turn away from it is a recipe for disaster. We need to make wise choices. We need to make obedient choices, and certainly one of those is to obey God’s will when we know it. What does the future hold? It’s kind of like we’re saying to God, about you know, I know more about the future. Let me handle this. I know what I’m going to do tomorrow. I know what I’m going to do next year.

That’s the ultimate arrogance because God could take it away from you in a heartbeat. Our disobedience will never cause us to lose our salvation. Once saved, always saved. It has to do with reward. What a shame! After a lifetime as a Christian, to stand before God and not have anything to show for it, to have nothing worthy of a reward from Him. It’s like being disqualified from the race before it’s over. You know that was one of Paul’s prayers was that he would finish the race well, and that should be our prayer too, that we would live a life that is worthy of reward at the end. If you are a fan of old graveyards, and many people are, they go out and they make rubbings on the stones. Especially if you go into New England, you will often find old tombstones that have D V inscribed on them. D like dog, V like victory.

It is Deo volente. It means if God will. That’s how we should live each of our days. If God wills, if God gives me another day, I will do His will for me in that day. Verse 17. So for no one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, for him it is sin. In this verse, James is kind of summing up the whole.

Chapter: We should submit to God. We should resist the devil. We should draw near to God. We should repent of our sins, of our transgressions, of our refusal to follow God's will. We should stop slandering our brothers and sisters, and we should stop planning on our own. We should plan under God's plan. It's we're so prone to go to God with our plans and ask for a rubber stamp, and James says it doesn't work that way.

Sin is twofold. It is doing what is forbidden by God, but it's also not doing what is commanded by God. Again, back to that thing of knowing to do God's will and not doing it. That is sin. We have sins of commission, things that we willfully, wantingly do, but we also have sins of omission. Things that we should have done that we did not do, a word we could have spoken, a deed we could have done, a place we could have gone to, and made a difference. So remember, not only sins of commission, but sins of omission. You got a couple of handouts there to kind of sum up what we've talked about today. The idea of repenting and submitting to God, all of the things that we should be doing.

And another is just a little story about how much he loves each and every one of us. America 250. We are still looking at people named James, and mostly we've been looking at people that have gone before us. This one is a much more contemporary story. Today, it's the person that many of you may even know. His name was D. James Kennedy. He was the pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. A megachurch in Florida. He was the pastor from 1959 until his death in 2007. At the dedication of a new sanctuary at Coral Ridge, he said this: "It is our prayer that through this church, the gospel of Jesus Christ might be radiated through television, radio, motion pictures, cassettes, books, and clinics."

And by ways yet undreamed of unto the entire world, that the command of Christ to go and proclaim the gospel to every creature might be fulfilled in our generation. He was a firm believer in the rich Christian heritage of America. In 2003, he wrote this. He says, "In reading over the constitutions of all 50 of our states, I have discovered that without exception, all 50." Contain an appeal or a prayer to the Almighty God of the universe. All fifty reference God as the Creator of our liberties and the Preserver of our freedoms. And the Bible says in Revelation 11, "We give thanks to Thee, O Lord God Almighty." I thought that this story about Kennedy was especially interesting.

There was not a date given for when this new sanctuary was built. But did you look at the things that he said he hoped could be used—television, radio, motion pictures, and cassettes—and if we were teaching this in the youth department, they probably wouldn't even know what we're talking about on some of this stuff. But that's just how much our world has changed. But the vision that he had, because he said, in ways yet undreamed of, startling. Taking it all around the world, there are commercials on TV of people in canoes in a swamp, riding camels in the desert with their Starlink. The gospel has ways to be carried to the end of the world that we never dreamed of. God knew it all along. God knew it was coming. God gave people the ability to develop it, to bring it to fruition, and for us to use it. So, Kennedy's prayer is being answered in ways even he never dreamed of.

I pray this week that as you go, God will bless your path. He will send you where you need to go. You will be obedient to it, and He will bring you back to worship with us next week, filled with the great joy of knowing that you are indeed in God's will. Amen.

JAMES CHAPTER FOUR
GRACE AND HUMILITTY
TAKE A WAYS

We find it hard to believe the problem is us and not those around us

Four Dangerous Steps for the Christian to Avoid
Friendship with the world (James 4:4)
Love of the world (I John 2:15-17)
Conformity with the world (Romans 12:1-2)
Being judged with the world (I Corinthians 11:32)

Humility plans wisely and dependently
Remembering that tomorrow belongs to God

Repentance must touch both our hands and our hearts

His name was D. James Kennedy. He was the pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian , a mega church in Florida from 1959 until his death in 2007. At the dedication of a new sanctuary he said: "It is our prayer, that through this church, the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be radiated through television and radio, motion pictures and cassettes, books and clinics, and by ways yet undreamed of unto the entire world, that the command of Christ to go and proclaim the Gospel to every creature might be fulfilled in our generation."
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We give thanks to Thee, O Lord God Almighty
Revelation 11:17

