

Draw Near to God: The Supreme Need (Part 1)

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Well, I've been asked: What about Ephesians? Yes, I'm thinking about Ephesians. And I'm looking ahead to Ephesians. And I have not forgotten where I left off there. I simply wanted to do something first. I had been thinking for months that the message that I was going to do at the Fellowship Conference this year was going to come from that - it's relatively well known - verse out of James 4: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Lots of us have that one in our house. Draw near to God. You see that. We have it in ours. I think it's in the bathroom. It's there on a sign. I've seen it different places. It may be at Evan's where we're staying right now. But we know that text. That's the text that I wanted to deal with at the conference. Of course, the conference doesn't happen. What that's done is it's allowing me the opportunity to develop this into just a mini-series. I'm not sure what it's going to be. It could be anywhere from three messages to ten messages. I'm just going to have to see how it develops as I go. I have ideas about what I want to say, where I want to go with regards to this passage. But I haven't developed it yet. I'm going to develop this one message at a time. I never got to the place where I created the sermon for the Fellowship Conference because I just wasn't ready to do that yet and we canceled it before I did that.

So this is where I want to go. So let's all turn in our Bibles to James 4. I don't want to just reach in and pull the verse out without its context, so I do want us to read the first 10 verses of James 4.

James 4:1, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You 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. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 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'? But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." That's verse 8. That will be the focus of our sermons over the next however many weeks. Let's keep reading. "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

So you see the verse that I want to deal with. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." That's the ESV rendering. Just 11 words. Now, one thing not a single one of us can do with these passages is approach this as a mere spectator. And I'm not just talking about v. 8. I'm talking about the verses that went before this. You can say, oh, that doesn't apply to me. I haven't murdered. Yeah, but we know this. We know that if we have anger towards somebody

that's not called for, if we hold wrath towards people, if we hate somebody, we know what the Bible says about that. And the truth is, we've had such feelings - the kind of feelings that provoke murder. We may have not gotten to the place where we've actually overtly committed the offense, but the reality is we have all felt the seeds of that kind of thing within us. None of us can step back and say: This doesn't apply to me. You can't do that. We're all players in this game. This touches every single one of us.

Just look at this. V. 2 - here's a basic statement. "You desire and do not have." Which one of us are going to say: "No, I can't go there. That's unfamiliar ground to me." Here's the thing, in fact, as we were singing, there was a line there that talked about our hunger for God. The second to the last song I believe. Hunger. The thing is: hunger. None of us look at hunger and say, "That's a foreign term to me. I don't understand that word." The thing is if you think about Christianity, I was thinking about hunger. We have a hunger. You think about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. The thing is if we really think about it, we are need machines. God has designed us - we need, we want, we desire, we thirst, we hunger - and really, the only thing that changes when we get saved is those needs and desires and wants and hungers just change. We don't stop. They just change. God designed us that way. That's how we are. I mean, nobody's going to dispute that fact.

And then look at this, it says it again in v. 2. "We do not have..." You just think about those words right there. Humans - us - lost or saved, there's all sorts of things we don't have. This is where desire comes from. Desire comes from: I want something I don't have. Even when we talk about hungering and thirsting for righteousness, you're hungering and thirsting (incomplete thought). For one, if you think about righteousness just in the righteousness you've obtained, you don't have that to perfection. If you think you're hungering after righteousness and hungering for the perfections of righteousness found in Christ, we don't have all of Christ that we want. We hunger for the Father. We don't have all the Father that we want. These are just the realities. We walk around with need.

I mean, you get up in the morning, what do you do? Where do you go? You go here. Why? Why does anybody even want to drink coffee? Because we want something. What do we want? You might like the taste of it. You might like the caffeine. Probably most of us like the caffeine. So I'll get me some. Why? We like to feel awake. Then what do you do? Well, you make breakfast or you drink smoothies. Why do you drink a smoothie like I do? It doesn't taste very good, but I desire something. What do I desire? I desire good health. You get in the shower. What do you desire? You don't want to feel greasy, grimy. You don't want to stink. You want your hair to look not all oily. We are just driven by desire. There's all sorts of things we do not have. What a description of us! I mean, it's not only man's basic source of his problems, it's just our makeup. It's how we're created. Which of us haven't desired something that we don't have? There's not a single one of us.

And it's not just like, oh yeah, you could think back to a time three years ago when that happened. Every single day we are confronted and we're driven, we're motivated. We do things, we go places, we eat things, we drink things. We pray. We come to Scripture. What drives this? You can say, well, it's just duty. It's this or that. But there's something, there's some kind of earnestness there. There's some kind of passion there. There's some kind of appetite there that draws us in everything. Everything. You get a person that's suffering. You get a person that

doesn't have good health. My wife is suffering right now. This thing just goes from one stage of bad to another stage of bad. What do you want when you're like that? Well, you long to have health back.

Conflict. You get in a place where you're worried about things. There's conflict. Or there's a pandemic. I want to live. I don't want to get sick. Oh no, we're going to go into a great recession. What do you want? What do you desire? Well, I desire not to lose my job. Why? See, we're just driven by all these things.

What happens in man? You know one of the things, man comes into the world, and he's just unsatisfied. He's ungratified. Have you ever seen a little baby? I mean a little one. This thing can be newborn. I've seen four of them real close up. They come into this world and what do they do? Have you ever seen a little baby just days old cry at the top of its lungs? What does it usually want? It wants mama's milk. That's how we come into the world: Just, "Wahhh! Give me! Give me! Give me!" That is mankind.

If you look at the problems in the world, look, this isn't rocket science. This isn't something that any of us are mere spectators to. We can relate. We look at man and we say what is the matter with us? Well, it comes back to this. And the thing is it's not just that we have all these desires, there are a bunch of things in the world that we may want that we don't need, but the truth is man has desperate needs. We have things that we need!

And that's one of the things that I want to talk about. As we think about drawing near to God, we need to think about what our supreme need is. What is the real matter with us? And on an individual level, a personal level, real level, what is our most urgent need? What is it? I'm not asking a question that is simply pie in the sky. This isn't just some religious gibberish that we're supposed to hear about at church.

Look what James says. "What causes quarrels? What causes fights among you? Is it not this...?" Your passions. And it's something that's going on within us. There's war within us. This isn't just war outside of us. This isn't just people in conflict. Yes, that's here too. But it's within us. We have conflict within. We desire. We don't have. You covet and cannot obtain. It says it again: you do not have. It says you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

Well, you know, we need to come back to this. What is Christianity? What is it? I ask that because the message of Christianity is the only hope in this world today. It's the only place that we're going to find an answer. And we need to ask ourselves: what is the Christian message? What does it really address? What does it give us the answer for? What answer do we have for the world? With all of its needs? And see, you know what? We know what goes on within us. That's what you've got there. Within us. Within us. It's these passions at war within us. And you know what happens? You take not only yourself who's wired like that, you fill the world with how many? Are we at 8 billion yet? You fill the world with billions and billions and billions of people that are all wired the same way. What's going to happen? What answer do we have for the world? What is that absolute need that the Gospel addresses? What does the Gospel see as man's greatest need? Somebody will say: oh, the forgiveness of sin. That is not man's greatest need. Never is that the issue in Scripture. That sin is a barrier to what our greatest need is, but having it forgiven, that's not it.

So what is it do you think? What would you answer? What is the supreme need of man? Now, look, I know everybody right now, you're listening to a sermon. So you've got your

theological hats on. So everybody's thinking, well, yeah, we know the text you're preaching from, so we have a good idea about the answer. Everybody has their theological church minds operating right now. But look, I'm not interested in each one of us actually answering the way we would answer to pass the theological tests that Brother Jeff gives you on Saturday morning in his study.

That's not it. I'm asking you this: When you're all alone - you. You. When you're all alone, it's just you and your thoughts... that's it. You're sitting by yourself. What do you desire that you do not have? Now look, I'm not asking you for the proper theological answer. I'm asking you just to be truthful with yourself. And you know, look, there's a lot of things to desire. A Christian can desire lots of [things]. A Christian can desire to eat. A Christian can desire to be married. A Christian, Paul says, a Christian slave can desire to be free, and if he's got an opportunity... It's not like when we get saved, we only have one desire now. The issue is where the desires are, how much they control us, what we desire. Some of the desires that lost people have, saved people have, and there's nothing wrong with that. Some there is something wrong.

But I mean, just you and your thoughts. If you're to be honest, if you think about I know the kinds of things that I desire. I know the kinds of things that I want. I know the kinds of things when I'm sitting by myself, and you know that too. What is it? What is it? Just you, your passions, your desires. What do they tell you your supreme need is? I mean being honest. Not the theologically correct answer.

And yes, I recognize as Christians, there's no question. Our passions, our desires, and our appetites need to be submitted to truth and to minds that are renewed. I recognize that. But you all know what I'm talking about. You, with the mind you have, however renewed it is, what's happening inside you?

I mean, preparing to preach this, I asked myself that. What do I really want? What do I desire in life? I mean, look, I can honestly look and I can say I desire God to lead me clearly about the future. I can say honestly I greatly desire God would heal my wife. I look at it and I say I greatly desire to see God save [my daughter,] restore [my son-in-law and daughter's] marriage. I desire grandchildren. I desire a third Great Awakening. I do desire to go out and pray and find God and find Him close to me. I mean, I look at life, and I think - I'm just wanting to be transparent, and I want us all to think.

What is the supreme need? What is it? "What causes quarrels? What causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" Within you. What James recognized is something was happening within people. Need. Need is fundamental. There's not a single one of us that don't ache for something. Something. Needs confront us. Constant. They call to us. They are there. Need. Someone loses their health, like my wife. So what's the supreme need? Is it to be healthy again? We want to be free of misery. People want to fly away and be at rest. They want consciences that don't bother them. We are people. The idea of unfulfilled yearnings, you have them. Some of you look at your children and the yearning is, oh, that they would be saved. Just unfulfilled yearnings, that's just part of being man. But that's not just part of being man, that's part of every day, every hour, every minute of being a man. What is the need? What is the supreme need?

I mean, ask the rich. Are you satisfied? Ask the healthy. Are you free of misery? One says, I know, you can get people - single people. Oh, if only I could be married! And then you

find the married people: Oh, if only I could be single! There's endless possibilities. And the truth is that no matter what state a man or a woman finds themselves in, all the things of this world that we desire after, it leaves us with this gnawing sense of emptiness.

Look, all you have to do is look around at the world. You know what you see? We never have to be worried, if you're worried about this. Because I know this is a small thing. But you never have to be worried that Democrats are going to be in the office forever. Why? Because man is just this mass of unfulfilled desires. What does that mean? That means that no matter who is governing the country, whatever party is there, they're not going to remain there forever, unless they become dictators and they force themselves. But when it comes to a democratic vote, they're not going to stay there. Why? Because people are unsatisfied. They're constantly unsatisfied. No matter who's there, they want something different because they always think, remember when Obama came in? Oh, he's the savior! Men are always looking for the savior. They're always looking for the answer. You know why a TV show rarely makes it beyond just a season or two? If it's ten years, it's like, whoa! That really went long. Because men are unsatisfied. That's the way it is.

Men's wants. Men have this gnawing sense of emptiness. What do men want? I'll tell you what men want. They want something more. You know, the real need of man is to get to the place where you finally get something that it doesn't leave you wanting more. That's it. There's a thirst in man. There's a longing for something that has been lost. Man keeps looking for it. When it comes down to it, all these different things, they're not a supreme need of mankind. And the message of Christianity is, it does, it brings us face-to-face with what the ultimate need is.

And what is it? Well, you know our text. The ultimate need is to know God. You may ask: Well, how can you be certain about that? On what authority do you make such a statement? Well, it's all right here in our text. What does James see? James sees people who desire and don't have. And in the end, what does he say? Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. Draw near to God and you'll have Him. That seems to be the answer to all this gnawing, unfulfilled desire that man is plagued with. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

Look, don't we just go simply back to the first book in our Bibles and we see Genesis? I mean, look at man there. There he is. He's in the garden. He's happy. He walked with God. It says God would come into that garden walking in the cool of the day. He was near. He was close to God. Man lived with God. And what was it? It was paradise. I mean, isn't that what we talk about? Paradise lost. See, man had it all and he lost it.

Have you thought about how Scripture expresses what happened next? What does the Bible say? What does the Bible say that our iniquities did? What does the Bible say that sin did? You know. You know the verse. This is a classic verse. Isaiah 59. Many of you know it. Now, you may not know exactly where it comes from, but you know this verse. "Your iniquities have made a separation." He sank - Adam sank his teeth, and you can imagine. It's like he and God are like this. He sinks his teeth... bang! And it goes on. It says that your sins have hidden His face. Isn't this interesting terminology? It's not just separation. "Hidden His face."

We can go to different places in the Bible and what do you find? You find this terminology. In Ezekiel it's like this: "The house of Israel who are all estranged from Me through their idols..." Man goes after other things. And what happens? Estranged. So you have

separated, His face is hid, estranged. Or how about this? "They were broken off because of their unbelief." Wow, what a picture is that! Broken off.

Or how about this? Separated. Do you remember how Paul describes the Ephesians? We came through these passages back in Ephesians 2. He says that at one time, you Gentiles in the flesh, you know what he hits on? He says you were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, you had no hope. You were without God in the world. But "separated." Separated. This is what Paul says to the Galatians. He says, oh, you want to be justified by works? You're separated from Christ and you're fallen from grace. I mean, there is a problem. We see it. We feel it. Alienated. Man's greatest problem.

You know, another classic text. God tells us through the prophet Jeremiah. He says this, "My people have committed two evils." What's the first evil? My people forsook Me. Now, God didn't forsake them. They forsook Him. And you know what the second evil is? They have gone to hewing out for themselves what? Broken cisterns. And you know what? That's what always happens. Why? Because man is a need machine. That's it. If you forsake God, the needs don't go away. That longing, that earnest thirst doesn't go away because that's the way we're designed.

You just have to recognize this. This is what's behind worship. Worship has to do with where you find worth. That which seeks to satisfy that inner craving and inner need. What you need to recognize is this: God created us as utterly thirsty. And He created us to only be satisfied with Himself. And the problem is, you sell out God, you are still thirsty. And so you'll go and you will try to drink from every broken cistern imaginable. That's what happens.

And once we see man's greatest problem, it immediately points to man's greatest need. I'm talking about the highest, the most extreme need. You can see this from the authority of Scripture. Our greatest need is not the forgiveness of sins. Yes, yes, we have to have that. Because it's the sins that cause Him to hide His face from us. But remember, that's the issue. He's hidden His face from us. You see, to have your sins dealt with, that's necessary, but why? That's not an end in itself. That's to get His face to smile upon us again. That's the issue. That's the need. It's God Himself.

Don't you love this? Some of you have come across this verse. Again, this is the prophet Jeremiah. Listen to this. "Let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows Me." Wow. "...That I am the Lord Who practices steadfast love, justice, righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." You need to recognize that. It's not just: let him who boasts, boast in this, that he knows the Lord. The Lord is saying, look, that's My delight. My delight is that you know Me. And when we know Him - all man's needs come back to this. Because what need do you have that doesn't get answered by a relationship with Him? You say you're sick. "I am the Lord that healeth thee." You say I don't have rest. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest." What is it that you lack? Well, I'm poor. Have you never heard of the unsearchable riches of Christ? "I am thy exceeding great reward." There is not a thing that we lack. You say, there's sorrow. He wipes away every tear. The thing is if you find Him, every need man feels, every lack of happiness, every thirst, every dilemma, everything...

But what's man's problem? Man's problem is he doesn't know God. And he wanders. He just walks around in this world with all this pull. It's pulling. Desires pull you. And so man's just

like on a leash and he's being pulled around by his desires. Sin seeks to reign in his mortal body and it causes him to obey those desires of his body. That's what it says in Romans 6. Man's led around by this leash of his desires. And he's longing, he's longing, he's longing. He's got all these broken cisterns. Sex, money, power, success, my hobbies, my sports... it's always something. Man has just tried, he's tried - I've mentioned this before. I remember when I first met Eric and it's like he felt like he was in bondage and idolatry to graffiti. It's like, isn't it amazing? Men! The things men become entangled with. We can all look at Eric and say, you know, I'm not like that. No, but you're like you are. And you probably have issues Eric doesn't. And so do I. And some of them may be common to us, but it doesn't matter if it's common or it's not common. It doesn't matter if you've got your own cistern or we share one. If the thing's broken, it's broken. And we're always hewing these things out for ourselves.

And what's happened? We've forsaken... we wander around in the world and we're looking and looking. And oh, I'm going to try that cistern and that cistern and that cistern. And all the time there's a fountain over here. Man is not at rest. Man is not at peace. What do we have?

Look, the reality is this. He is the supreme need. And that's really what all this message is about. It's this - it's the first step in this. Drawing near to God. Because this isn't a minor thing for us. This answers to us at the deepest level. But I'm talking about if you really draw near to Him. There's got to be reality in this. This just can't be fictitious. And you can't just live on the truth. You can't just look at James 4:8. Look: Oh yeah, that's wonderful! I've got it in my bathroom at home. That's great! Decorates the wall or the table there. Wonderful! No, that's no good. I mean, oh, it's a great truth, but it does you no good. It does you no good to hear it. The only thing that does you good is to draw near to God and to have it be real. That's what we have to have. Listen to it. "What causes quarrels? What causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have."

Now think about that. Quarrels. Why? Why would there be quarrels? Desire. What do we have a desire to be? What does man really desire? Fallen man - he desires to be his own god. That's what he desires. You know what this is? You know what this quarreling is? It's simply a fight between gods. It's all about wanting to be most important, top dog. It's each of us fighting for our rights. It has to do with one thing only: man is not near to God. Man has not humbled himself to God, submitted himself to God. Man is not right with God. Instead of men - all men together in unified fashion bowing down to the true God, each seeks to set himself up as God. And what do you end up with? Quarreling. Because it's a fight between the gods. That's the issue. He doesn't know God. He isn't in a right relationship with God. And so what happens? He ends up not being in a right relationship with each other. I want my rights. You want your rights. I have desires. My desires conflict with your desires. You want to live. But men will kill each other. I'll take away what you have because I want what I want. And I don't care what you want. That's how man is. Rather than us bowing down.

Whatever need you mention, it just doesn't matter. It comes back to this. Where does all the unhappiness in this world come from? It's the same thing. And the thing is everything - graffiti and everything else in this world - everything, every possible broken cistern, it's been tried and it's failed. I mean every time. Man is just constantly - what is he doing? He's constantly trying to outmaneuver all the things that discourage him and get him down and defeat him. He's always trying to maneuver around those. He's always trying to outwit those things. He tries one

remedy. He tries another remedy. The thing is everything's been tried and they're all found wanting. That's just the reality. Which rich man has ever cried out at some point as he's amassing wealth, he just cries out, "I've found it!"? "I've found fulfillment." "I've found the gold at the end of the rainbow." "This is it. My quest is no further." "I've gained enough money. I'm eternally fulfilled. I'm happy."

You know that's not the case. The Bible tells us it's not the case. No matter how much man has, he's always lusting for more. The more he has, the more he wants. But you know what, the more he has, it's like the more miserable he becomes. Unfulfilled he seems to be. And there's no hope. This is what Paul says. Paul says, "separated from Christ." See? Alienated. You're far away. You have no hope. You're without God. No hope. There's no hope.

And see what happens is we're always trying to outmaneuver all the hopelessness. Oh, that's cistern over there - that's going to do it! And see, that's the promise. That's the promise of advertising. That's what they're big into. Ah, Starbucks! Get this, you've got it all. That's advertising. You need this kind of shirt. You need that kind of car. Look at the people in our commercial. They're happy. You want to be happy. See them in that car? You get that car. You'll be happy like them. Then you get that car and you're not happy like them, because something inside is still gnawing. And that's what happens. People try to drown it out. And they'll get the drugs. They'll go to drinking.

Or they just keep the noise up all the time. Keep busy. I've got to go see my counselor. I'm not saying there isn't a place for some Christian counseling that could be good. I'm talking about your worldly psychiatrist, psychologist, psychoanalyst. There's no hope in any of that. People never find hope in that. They get put on the medicine and they go to the doctor. Have you ever found the old person that they're like, oh yeah, 20 years ago, I found this psychiatrist. He put me on this medication. And I have been happy ever since! You know the way they keep in business is because people just go from one level of misery to the next, and so they keep going back because they try these cisterns and they simply don't work. They don't work. Why is it that you know we're not going to have a Republican in the White House for eternity? Well, because nothing works. It doesn't work in this world. Man is always unsatisfied. He wants change. And he thinks change is going to be the next cistern. But the next cistern is as broken as the last one. And man knows it! You know it! I know it! We know it!

And we know it even as Christians. Why? Because we've been dense in the head enough to forsake God, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. And what do we do? We go back and dip cups in the old cisterns. And then we find them just as broken as they were before we got saved.

And you say I don't know who James is talking to here. Sometimes it sounds like this could be lost people (incomplete thought). Does it really matter? It's the same. I know, sometimes it is difficult to know who James exactly is talking to, but it really doesn't matter here. Our answers are the same whether we're lost or saved because we're made up of the same stuff. We're human beings and there's only one basic ultimate supreme answer to our need. That's it.

Where are we going to go to? People go to religion all the time, but does that ever help people? Look, you remember how it was when ISIS was set up over there in the Middle East? Remember how it was? Have you ever seen how al-Qaeda first and then ISIS came along

second, and they were trying to lure in the young people from like in Western Europe? You ever hear the stories of some of the people that went over there? They didn't find it to be the paradise it was all celebrated to be.

I just came from Utah not too long ago. You know what's happening? Young people en masse are leaving Mormonism. Why? There's nothing to it. There's no hope there. Catholicism. What does that breed? You've got a bunch of priests that are pedophiles. Look, there's a lot of Baptist religion. There's no hope in it. It's empty. Why? Because ultimately, what it does is it says to people like us who are sinful, failures, fallen, broken, slaves to our sin, slaves to the devil, it comes along and says: Be good. Do this and live. And what hope is there in that?

So what does man do? Man tries to do something. But again, now he's got a conscience. And the conscience is always telling him, it's another broken cistern. Because he's not finding fulfillment. It's not like, oh yeah, I've been good enough. There's always this nagging sense: have I been good enough? Are the balances really going to go down on my side?

You know what, look around. Man climbs a mountain. Oh, that's great. That's beautiful. He wins a big game. Wonderful. He sees a movie. Wow, that really stirred me. That moved me. That entertained me. But what happens? Give that man the same mountain to keep climbing. Give that man the same sunset to keep watching. What does he do? He grows tired of it. Why? Because that's the way we're wired. Because we're longing for something. Why is there so much divorce in the world? My life will be right if I get this woman. But then, it's not right. And by the time you look up, the guy's on his third wife. Why?

Brethren, every power that man possesses has gone into trying to strive to fill this one supreme need. Man tries everything! Everything! And it fails him. And there's one thing still not being tried. And it's drawing close to God. When everything else has been tried and found wanting, this needs to register with us. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." I'm going to say this again. The only thing that answers this need is finding God. This verse does not answer the need. The truth of this verse answers the need. You say what do you mean? It's kind of like this, you can go into a restaurant. You can look at the menu. And you can see the picture and see there's a sirloin steak. But you know what? That shows you what's available, but it doesn't give the steak to you. This is like what we find here. That verse by itself, that's like looking at the menu. All that's doing is telling you what's available. But if we don't actually sink our teeth into that juicy sirloin steak, what good is the menu if you only get that far and you go no further? Knowing what's available is not the same as obtaining what's available.

Look, here's the reality we need to recognize. God made us and God made us for Himself. He designed us this way. He wanted man to have earnest appetites. But see He designed us specifically to find utter fulfillment in Him and nowhere else. Nowhere else. So struggle as we will, you can let man exercise his ingenuity to manufacture and hew out these broken cisterns, but you just look around. Find all those miserable souls that have lived their life drinking from all these broken cisterns. And I'd say this to young people, I say this to people in our church. If you have never gone to the nursing home ministry, I tell you, go. Go over there. If you have never gone, go and behold. You say what do you mean? I mean this: drink it in. Go see what it's like. You young people who think ah, the real path to happiness, I've got to escape my parents. I've got to escape my parents' religion. Then it will be good. Then it will be happy.

Parents who plead with you to surrender to Christ. They tell you there is water to be drank there that will satisfy you.

But no, you've got your own ideas. Go to the nursing homes. Look at those people. People who sought their happiness where? In all the same things that people all over the place seek them. Their problem is they're just old. They've kind of run the gauntlet here. They've tried the cisterns. They've looked at family and relationships and money and success and families and gardens and yards and houses and jobs and beauty and health, and all those things, the prosperity, but look at them now. Yes, yes, there's pleasure in sin for a season and they can testify to some of that, but look at those people. Behold those old broken empty-eyed souls now. Look at them! Go there! Look! These are the people who are just a few steps ahead of you. Look at them. You look into their eyes. I'll tell you what you see. You see people with hollowed-out, empty eyes. And there's hopelessness just staring before them. They're on the verge of hopeless eternity. They've tried the cisterns. And even if they have bank accounts that are full of money, look at them now. See which ones - I've been there. I've been to a number of different nursing homes. And you see the ones, you find the ones that truly at that age have joy. And there's only one. Oh yeah, some of them may still be able to work up a smile if their grandchildren come in there. Look, they're still broken cistern seeking so even when the grandkids come in, they think that's going to make me happy. Look at them when the grandkids leave. There they sit, hollow and old and empty. The only ones that keep that joy - I remember when Leslie Smith was in the nursing home. I called him there. The guy was just so full of joy.

You can run from this. You can run from what I'm saying, but I'll tell you, it'll catch you. And the reality is that ignore it if you want, close your eyes to this truth, but you're turning back on something that is going to spin you around one day. There's an emptiness. You can't wickedly turn your back on the Lord and think that it's just going to go well. Why? Because, you know what the Lord comes along and He says: Oh, the wicked - by the way, the wicked is just anybody that doesn't draw near to the Lord. It's he who doesn't seek the fountain of living waters, but rather resorts to the broken cisterns. That's a wicked person. And what God says is this: There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord. How can He just know that? Because He's the One that gives peace. And He's the One that's designed us. And He's designed it so that the only way you'll ever get rest and health, gratification, and satisfaction, fullness to overflowing is going to be to find Him. That's the only way. He's designed it that way. And He will not dispense peace to the wicked. It's just not going to happen.

And listen, the devil's a liar. And you know one of his common lies: he is going to tell you that to draw near to God is bondage. It is going to ruin your life. God's a hard taskmaster. He's going to suck the life out of you. Uh-huh. Jesus says it. Now you can believe Him or you can believe the devil. But Jesus says this: I not only give you life, I'll give you life more abundantly. Now who doesn't want that? You ask anybody in the world: Do you want life? Real life? Life more abundantly? It's found in Christ. Meh... because they've bought into the lie. What's the lie? The broken cistern is going to satisfy and Christ will not satisfy. You go to Christ, I mean, He's the opposite of satisfaction! He's the opposite of a fountain of living water. He is THE broken cistern. That's what the devil's going to tell you. It's just a lie. It's a lie right out of the pit.

All you have to do is think for a second. Wait, who created the beautiful sunset for me to look at? Who created these magnificent mountains? In fact, who created sex? Did the devil do

that? God did that. And you know what Jesus said? Jesus said that I came to do the will of My Father. Ah, He came to do the will of His Father. Hm, do you realize what it was the will of the Father for Him to do first? By way of sign and miracle in the book of John? He comes along and He turns water into wine. Wine! He didn't turn it into mud and force it down our throats. He didn't turn it into sewage or bleach. He turned water into wine. Wine! And the master of ceremonies says, oh, it's good wine!

You say, what is there about that? Just think about this. The Good Samaritan went, you remember, the guy who was beat up, needed help. "He went to him and bound up his wounds pouring on oil and wine." You see, wine in Scripture is a picture of that which is healing.

But even more, listen to this: the Bridegroom in Song of Solomon says, "I came to My garden, My sister, My bride. I gathered My myrrh with My spice. I ate My honeycomb with My honey. I drank My wine with My milk."

What's the answer? I'll tell you the answer to man's greatest need: it's to be right with God. That's the wine of life. He alone has the ability and the power to bless us. Man is constantly trying to bless himself. Constantly. Always trying to make his own wine. That's what our government just did. Let's send them stimulus checks! That's going to help. That's going to heal it all. That'll do it. Did it? Did that bring eternal peace to anybody? Did that solve man's sin problems? Did that really set men at ease? I have a feeling a lot of people took that money and they drank it down, they gambled it away. They never satisfy. And we just go from one cistern to the next. We buy into the delusion that the next one, that's going to be it.

And you know what, we as Christians, we above anybody, we know this. Are we living - this is the question. This is the real question. Whoever you want to say James is talking to - lost? Saved? The issue is this, are we living as we were meant to live? Are we somehow proud of ourselves? Trying to be satisfied with ourselves and with other things. You know what every one of us knows? It doesn't satisfy. We can attest there can be some pleasure in sin, but we all know it. We know it. We don't have the ability to bless ourselves whether we're Christians or not. What do we need? We need somebody above us. Somebody greater than us. Somebody that's unlimited in resources to fill us and overflow us and bless us that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

And this can't be theory. I'm going to end in saying this one more time. Listen, when you draw near to God, and He draws near to you, I mean, God in all of His holiness. When you look at Isaiah and he came and he saw the Lord high and lifted up and on a throne. And the seraphim were there and they had six wings and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew, saying "holy, holy, holy." And Isaiah is trembling. You come close to the Lord, things happen. When those disciples got close to Christ and they began to see that glory breaking through, they were afraid. What sort of Man is this? There was a fear that came upon them. Things happened. Coming close to God, it's like coming close to lightning or coming close to a volcano of pure and overwhelming light and glory and love and beauty. You know what you can't have? Is: Well, I'm trying to draw near to the Lord. Then what's the question? Well, has He drawn near to you? Well, I don't know... I think He has. Maybe He has. I hope He has. I mean, I might have felt something. Is that what this text is? Some marginal thing?

Brethren, do you know what we want? We want experiences where time stands still. We want experiences like we've been taken up to glory. Lifted up to the spiritual realm. I mean, is

not this the thing that the church has lost? We want the living fire. We want to come out of prayer... we want tears. We want to feel. We want joy unspeakable and full of glory. We want to come close to Him and we want to be so smitten with an awe of His holiness. We want to come close to where it drops us on our faces or causes us to leap for joy. Those are the things that happen in Scripture! They tremble. They leap. They say, oh, wretched man! Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips. This is the kind of thing that happened. Men trembled. Men feared. Men rejoiced. Men were blown away with the glory. Think, we want the Mount of Transfiguration. We want something to happen. You don't want to go away from this and then it's like, well, I'm trying to draw near to God, but you know, I'm just not sure if anything happens. This is a promise of something. This is a promise of that which answers our need.

Listen, if your Christianity doesn't yield the reality of this, you know what will happen? You'll keep going back to the broken cisterns. Because you won't say it, and you won't admit it to one another, but what will happen is you walk out into the world and you know if Christianity has not yielded that which satisfies. If you have not tasted the glory of Christianity which is God Himself, if you don't know that, you'll go back to the broken cisterns. And you may feel like you have to be here on each Lord's Day, you have to go to the prayer meeting. Because the thing is, the broken cistern you're really going after is religion. The scales have to bear in your favor in the end. But you know as well as I do, and I know this, that if you don't find the sweetness of Christianity and the power of Christianity, and the glory of God to where you're blown away, you're filled up, you rejoice, you feel the fullness and the satisfaction of it... The man is walking through the field and he finds treasure. If something doesn't happen in your life where you recognize: I found the Treasure! And with joy I am willing to sell all that I have. You know what all those things are? They're all the broken cisterns. And he'll go sell them because he found that and he knows it gratifies and satisfies. And if you don't have that, then you just go back to the broken cistern. And you'll not sell them with joy. You'll just keep going back to them. Because in your heart and mind, you're thinking there's nothing to it. There's nothing in Christianity. But I'm telling you, you don't want to do that with this promise. There's something in this promise. In the weeks ahead, this is what we're going to look at. Man's supreme need is right here.

Father, help us. Help us. Help us. I pray in Christ's name, amen.