

Fights and Quarrels

by Alistair Begg

James 4 teaches us that our desires and sinful nature are the root causes of conflicts and quarrels, and that genuine submission to God in prayer is essential for overcoming these struggles.

Duration: 42:59

Scripture: James 3:18 - 4:3, James 4:5-6, James 4:14-15

Topics: "Quarrels"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the problem of conflicting passions and desires. He emphasizes that we cannot have it both ways and must choose between following God's will or pursuing our own selfish desires. The preacher also highlights the importance of humility and accepting God's sovereign purposes in our lives. He concludes by reminding the listeners of God's love and grace, and how He perseveres with His children. The preacher encourages the audience to be peacemakers, sowing a harvest of righteousness in their own lives and the lives of others.

Transcript

The following message by Alistair Begg is made available by Truth For Life. For more information visit us online at truthforlife.org We're going to read from the Bible in James chapter 4 in the New Testament. James chapter 4 and reading from verse 1. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it.

You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace.

That is why Scripture says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Amen. Just a brief prayer together.

As we turn to the Bible, we pray, O God, that you will help us to love what you command and to desire what you promise. For the sake of your Son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Well, if you've kept your Bible open, you know that we are continuing our studies here in this letter of James. This last two or three studies has focused on the distinction between the wisdom which comes from heaven, which is heavenly, obviously, and is displayed with a humble heart and in the quality of life, and contrasted with the wisdom in verse 15, which is described as being earthly and unspiritual and of the devil. That wisdom, as we saw last time, reveals itself in envy and in selfish ambition, and the upshot of it is that where that is prevalent, then you find disorder and every evil practice.

He finishes chapter 3 in the 18th verse, describing a wonderful harvest of righteousness that is the experience of peacemakers who sow in peace. Peacemakers being the wise ones who go on quietly sowing a harvest of righteousness, first in their own lives by God's enabling and then in the lives of other people. And I think it is the closing verse of 13, although we recognize that there are no chapter breaks in the original, but it is the closing verse of verse 18 that makes the opening verses of chapter 4 quite striking, I think you would agree.

Peacemakers, sowing in peace, a harvest of righteousness, and then immediately the next sentence, what causes fights and quarrels among you? Has James launched off in an entirely different direction? Did he go away for breakfast, as it were, and come back later in the morning and decide to take another tack entirely? Now, I don't think so. I think it follows directly and fairly obviously. Peace, the kind of peace that is represented in verse 18, is far from what is described in the opening parts of chapter 4. And indeed, the distinction is so very, very clear.

He is essentially saying that the events that I am now about to address with you, coveting and quarreling and misplaced affections and wrongful desires, they certainly do not fit category one. They are not an embodiment of the wisdom that comes down from heaven. But rather, the picture that he gives to us is the antithesis of that.

It is a description of lives that are marked by unfulfilled desires and by a restlessness that is liable at any time and in any place to break out in fighting and in feuding. In fact, I think the humility factor which runs really through the whole book of James may actually be far more of a key to understanding it than I've even given any consideration to. The notion that humility coming from wisdom in verse 13 works itself out in a certain way and the absence of that and the presence of pride in another seems to make just a melodic line that runs through at least a significant number of these verses.

Because it is the humble individual who recognizes that father knows best. It is the proud individual that says God didn't give me this and I'm going to have to go and get it for myself. It is a humble individual who says my life is very brief as we read in the Old Testament Psalm.

And as James reminds us here in the second half of chapter 4, you don't know what will happen tomorrow, you're amiss that appears for a little while. The humble person recognizes that. The proud person says no, I'm actually in charge of my destiny and in charge of my life and tomorrow I'm going to go and do this and I'll spend a year here or there and I will get profit and I will carry on business and I will make money for myself.

Not that the making of money is in itself wrong, but a preoccupation with money and with self-aggrandizement is representative of earthly wisdom and not heavenly wisdom. And so James, as he

comes from this little section that we know is the end of chapter 3 into chapter 4, he's making it clear to his readers in the words of John Lennon that life is very short and there is no time for fussing and fighting, my friends. That's what he's saying really, isn't it? I need to talk to you about fussing and fighting.

I need to talk to you about feuding and quarreling. And I want you to know that life is going by very, very quickly and there's no time for this kind of foolishness. It's not unique to James.

You find Paul doing the same thing at the beginning of 1 Corinthians in the third chapter where he says, by this time I should be addressing you as adults. I have to address you as babies because you're worldly. How do I know that you're worldly? Because there is still fighting and feuding among you and this just gives me the indication that all is wrong with you.

He does the same thing as he gets to the end of his second letter in chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians and identifies these individuals as living just like men of the world. Well, you say, has he then in chapter 4 identified a new audience? Is he addressing people different from those whom he has been addressing in chapter 3 and 2 and 1? And the answer is clearly no. His target is still, according to verse 18 of chapter 1, those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, those who are followers of Jesus, those who, according to God's purpose, he chose to give us birth through the word of truth, the story of the gospel as revealed in Jesus, so that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Those are the recipients of the letter. It's not written to a place, it's a more general letter than that which would be written to the believers in Corinth or whatever it might be. And indeed it is a very generic nature of it which helps us to understand just how applicable it is to each of us this morning.

No, the person he's addressing here in chapter 4 is the believer who has been making an attempt to sit on the fence. The individual who's trying to have it both ways. The person who wants to love God and to love himself.

The girl who wants to pay attention to what the Bible has to say, but only in selected areas of life. And the fence-sitter is about to discover that this fence is actually shaky, it's wobbly, it's painful, and inevitably one will come down on one side or on the other. If their hearts are humble, then they will acknowledge that God knows and he knows what's best for his children.

If the heart is not humble and fails to accept what God the Father in his sovereign purposes is doing, then in the pursuit of pleasure or in the pursuit of profit, these individuals will discover that solid joy and lasting treasure is actually beyond their reach. It is this preoccupation with the desires from within. Now what I'd like to do is simply suggest to you that we can look at verses 1 to 3 under the heading The Problem of Conflicting Passions.

The Problem of Conflicting Passions. Because that is what he's referencing in these desires. The word here for desire, as we have it in the NIV, which may be lost if you have an older English translation, is the word *hedodon* in Greek, *hedodon*, which gives us our English word *hedonism*.

And it is the internal selfish orientation towards that which is apart from God and distinct from him. James makes this clear by beginning with two rhetorical questions. What about these feuds and struggles, he says, or these fights and quarrels? Where do you suppose they come from? And then rhetorically, can't you see that they come from inside? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? The heart of man is desperately wicked.

That's what the Bible says. It's not a politically correct statement, and it is challenged on multiple fronts on a daily basis. Explanations for the condition of humanity are offered to us consistently from all quarters, many of them failing to pay any attention at all to the idea of man being warped from the inside and indeed from the very outset of his existence, choosing his own selfish way rather than God's.

When a person comes to trust in Jesus, discovers Jesus to be a savior and a friend, that sinful propensity has its status changed so that sin no longer reigns in the life of a believer, of a Christian, but it remains in the life. It is not that its presence is eradicated, but it is that its status is altered. And this is of vital importance if we're going to understand what is happening in our lives when we seek to follow Jesus.

If we think that in becoming a follower of Jesus we have joined a house party or a tranquil experience or we're going to just enjoy some easy existence for the rest of our lives, then of course we have been sold a bill of goods that has nothing at all to do with the Bible. We immediately discover that the Westminster Confession of Faith is of great help to us when it announces the fact that the Christian is involved in a continual and irreconcilable war. A continual and irreconcilable war.

My wife and I have been watching programs from Britain now for a few weeks called Foyle's War, and I can recommend them to you. You can watch them with impunity. They're a detective story set in the context of Hastings in the south coast of England in the framework of the Second World War between 1941 and following.

And one of the recurring themes in it is, of course, the fact that there is a war on. So that when somebody says something about deprivation or about the absence of eggs or the inability to get butter, somebody will say, but don't you know there's a war on? And it is because the war is on that these things are part and parcel. We need to understand, if we are Christians today, that there's a war on.

That the same grace that reconciles us to God antagonizes us to the evil one. And the war is waged, the Bible tells us, on three fronts. Against the world, against the flesh, and against the devil.

The external elements are clearly the world and the devil. And the internal factor is our flesh, or if you like, our sinful nature. And it is on account of our propensity to sin that the devil is able, by means of all kinds of attractive propositions, to woo us away from our professed affection for Jesus and our professed desire to love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength.

Why, says somebody, is it so difficult to do this? Answer, because there is a war on. And we fight a royal battle daily and consistently by the enabling of God's Spirit through the instruction of God's Word to be free of the clutches of our own sinful nature. And John, in 1 John chapter 2, puts it in this way.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does comes not from the Father but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. Of course, it would be very possible for us to push this out to an extreme and to adopt a posture which sought to isolate us from the very world in which we've been set. But Jesus cleared that up, didn't he? In John 17, where in his high priestly prayer he says, Father, I don't pray that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

What James is saying and what John is saying here about worldliness is not a call for some kind of isolated experience whereby we are not engaged with the nature of the world in which we live or whereby we have no friends of those who do not share our view of the world and so on. No, it's not that at all. But it is that we face the continuing presence of indwelling sin, which is a base of operation, which is a quizzling in the human heart.

Every sin is an inside job. Every sin is an inside job. We cannot take the Tom Sawyer out.

The devil made me do it, Aunt Polly. The answer is, no, he didn't. No, he didn't.

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit who lives in you is greater than he who is in the world. And although he may make so very appealing and alluring to us attitudes and activities that would drive us away from God, every time we go that road, every time we make that choice, every time we take that path, we take it. We take it.

And it is by means of our own sinful desires. Now, that is important to understand. Otherwise, we're not going to really get what he's saying here concerning these conflicting passions.

And the conflicting passions come out very straightforwardly. The punctuation is difficult throughout all of these verses that I've just read. And not least of all, verse 1b and 2. Let me translate it for you the way I think is best.

You desire and do not have, so you kill. You covet and cannot obtain, so you quarrel and fight. You desire and do not have, so you kill.

If looks could kill. If looks could kill. The earthly, unspiritual, devilish wisdom, which is revealed in envy and selfish ambition, which creates disorder in every evil practice, is well familiar with the murderous gaze, with the glint in the eye that says, I would never physically do it to you because I don't have the guts.

But I wish you were dead. You desire and do not have, so you kill. You want stuff and you cannot obtain, so you quarrel and fight.

It's very painful, isn't it? I mean, surely it was a prophetic word when we began James 1.1. And I said, this is probably going to be one of the more painful journeys that we've taken as a church family. It's every Sunday after Sunday. It's the most uncomfortable experience to turn again and again to the Bible.

And here we find that a dissatisfied heart is never at peace with God, with itself, or with its fellow man. A dissatisfied heart is never at peace with God or with itself. And it won't be at peace with his spouse.

And if you have somebody who is constantly disruptive and detrimental, divisive, who flies off the handle at the slightest provocation, who comes in on a Monday morning to the office and she or he is just totally and already out of control, animosity abounds from them, then you can safely assume that there is something that is going on in private and that is unseen, that has produced what is now obvious and reveals itself in the community experience. And that is exactly what James is saying. If you want to know why there's fights and quarrels among you, don't they come from your desires that battle within you? So you see the progression within you, among you.

Within you, among you. It's not from the outside to the in, it's from the inside to the out. The issue is not circumstantial.

The issue is the desire of my heart. When the desire of my heart is wrong, then that which flows from my heart will be equally wrong and will produce this kind of animosity. Well, so somebody, I can answer that.

I think all you have to do is pray. Surely prayer is the answer. Well, prayer may be the answer, but it doesn't appear to be the answer according to James here, does it? In verse 3, you don't have because you don't ask God.

In some instances, you don't even pray about it at all. But when you do ask, you don't receive because you ask with wrong motives. So James actually goes right to the level of motivation and he says, you wouldn't be thinking of just asking God for this, would you? And why not? Because, you know, you'd be asking for what you have no right to.

For your asking is in the wrong spirit. You only want to satisfy your own desires. Now think about this for just a moment.

It is not an unfamiliar experience for me to be told by members of the congregation and people that I meet that the issue that they're tackling they've prayed about and absolutely nothing has happened. As if somehow or another, by the reciting of certain words and phrases, they can make it all go away or everything will be fixed. And James is pointing out that unless prayer is a genuine expression of submission to God, is a genuine willingness to say, God, you are sovereign and you must do according to what your word says in order to deal with me and to deal with my predicament.

Unless prayer is that, then it frankly is irrelevant. Because God hears prayers, Psalm 145, He hears the prayers of those who call upon Him in truth. So it takes us back to Augustine's great line, doesn't it? Oh Lord, make me pure, but not yet.

God does not hear that prayer. Oh God, fix this. But don't fix it in a way that challenges me, confronts me, is painful for me.

God is not interested. Because God will do what God does according to His revealed will and purposes. And if we are smart enough to know what God has said in His word about certain things, and we are actually coming to ask Him to do something that runs contrary to His word, then it's a complete waste of time.

It's an exercise in complete futility. Because we ask, not in order that we might receive, but in order that we might receive, in order that we might do what we want. And since God knows that's what we want, He says, Turn channel 3 off.

Turn channel 3 off. Beg's on again. He's on with the same thing.

But I know His heart. I know He has a stony heart. The Lord hears the cries of the penitent.

He hears the cries of the penitent. So if I don't have a penitent heart, He doesn't hear my cry. If I pray like the Pharisee, who was praying, remember, on the street corner with the tax collector beside him.

If I pray like the Pharisee, then I might as well just stand up and say, Hickory dickory dock, the mouse ran up the clock. The clock struck one. It's irrelevant.

I thank you that I'm not as other men. And certainly not like this fellow that's here, God. This guy, he does nothing.

I do everything. I pray. I fast twice a week.

I give my stuff away. I thank you. And the publican wouldn't even look up to heaven.

And he smote his breast and he said, God, be merciful to me, the sinner. And what did Jesus say? He said, This man went down to his house justified. Why? Because God hears the prayers of the penitent.

What causes fights and feuds among you? Why all this animosity? It comes from inside. Why don't you pray about it? Well, I should. But you better not pray about it, he says, unless you mean what you're saying.

Because you can't have it both ways. See, James is addressing essentially the backslider here. James is addressing the individual who has stepped out on the road to follow Jesus.

And a great affirmation of faith has accompanied him. I'm going to be the man that lives for Christ. And along the road, gradually, surreptitiously, it has begun to eat away.

His conviction has been eroded a little. I don't think this matters as much as I once did. I don't think it really matters about really listening to the Bible, or listening to all of the Bible, or paying attention to all of these things, and so on.

Before the person knows where he is, he's in Bypath Meadow. Or he's in Doubter's Castle. Or he's definitely at war with Apollyon.

This is all Pilgrim's Progress. He's a worldly wise man. He's talkative.

He's a backslider. He is, to quote a country western song, a walking contradiction. Partly truth, and partly fiction.

And God, who searches the hearts, knows. You see, the conflicting passions here have to do not simply with our processes or our application, but with our motivation. And so, we don't bring our lives before God to have him sort them out, because we don't really want them sorted out.

God knows that. You go to the doctor, the doctor does the diagnosis. You tell him, this is the problem here.

He says, that may be the presenting problem, but I'll tell you what the problem really is. And let me tell you what's going to be involved in fixing this. And then he lays out the treatment plan.

The person says, I don't like the treatment plan. You say, well, do you want to be cured, or do you want to live with it? I think I'll just live with it. Then the surgeon says, go live with it and die with it.

We come before God, asking him to fix things and sort things. And God knows our hearts. I often say my prayers, but do I really pray? And do the feelings of my heart go with the words I say? I might as well bow down and pray to gods of stone, as offered to the living God, a prayer of words alone.

That's why we began by praying. Help me, oh God, to love what you command and to desire what you promise. Help me to love what you command and to desire what you promise.

Because otherwise, I'm stuck here in verses 1 to 3 in the realm of conflicting passions. Verses 4 to 6, the problem of divided affection. The problem of divided affection.

What a striking beginning to verse 4, you adulterous people. Or you adulterers and adulteresses. Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? What is he talking about here? He's talking about disloyalty.

In the Old Testament, the picture of God's people is that of his betrothed. He has loved them. And he sends his prophets to them again and again to say, you shouldn't wander away from me.

You shouldn't have affections with other gods. You shouldn't bow down at these little shrines. You belong to me.

And so the prophets come and confront the people routinely in the realm of their spiritual adultery. You have been betrothed to God. Therefore, for you to do this is for you to be disloyal and adulterous.

As Christians, the same is true. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what's happened to us. We haven't adopted a program. You can adopt a program and not be a Christian, not be united to Jesus.

We haven't just decided to sing a certain bunch of songs as opposed to other songs we used to sing. What has happened to us is that we have been organically woven into the very fabric of Godhead in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have in our baptism expressed this.

We were buried with him in baptism and we were raised with him to newness of life. And in our baptismal service, as it will follow this evening, we were declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord. That he is Lord of all.

He's not Lord of part. He's Lord of the totality. All my money.

All my hopes. All my dreams. All my future.

All my sexuality. Everything belongs to him. And therefore, for us to engage in activity or to adopt attitudes which mar that relationship is to be guilty of spiritual adultery.

And that's what makes it so telling. Peter says, In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. What does that mean? Well, it means this.

That I have no freedom to believe about anything. Anything other than what my Lord has given me to believe. I have no right to determine where I belong.

Apart from where my Lord says you belong. And I have no right to behave in any way that I choose. Because the Lord Jesus is the one who determines my behavior.

And all of this on the basis of friendship. Friendship. Remember Jesus says, I call you my friends.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God. We have become the friends of God. We weren't God's friends.

God's wrath was revealed against all the wickedness and godlessness of men. He was opposed to us and we were opposed to him. How could we ever get together? Because of Jesus.

So that when he dies upon the cross, he bears God's righteous judgment against sin. Which is the meeting out of his wrath. And he pays the penalty for our sin as only he who was a man could do.

And only he who was God could provide. It's an amazing and a wonderful truth. And because he has gone to such extent to make us his friends.

Isn't it painful to see your face? Under the heading, you adulterous people. What do you think you're doing? He says, when I allow self and my own selfish desires to take the place of my submission to God. I make myself inevitably a friend of the world and therefore an enemy of God.

I have, if you like, walked out of the armies of the living God and walked over into the enemy's camp. And I may even be tempted to wear some of their uniform. So that like the 60s on the Kings Road in Chelsea.

People who by that time were in their 50s and 60s. Had the strange experience of seeing the trendsetters in the hippie years. Wearing their old clothes.

Wearing stuff that they had got rid of a long time ago. And now in this strange paradox, the hip were in the old stuff. But isn't that from the old days? Oh, yes.

But it works quite well with the new days. Isn't that language from the old days? Yeah. Isn't that animosity and envy from the old days? Isn't that some of your old clothes? Isn't that some of the wardrobe you used to have before you knew Christ? Yes.

Well, then why are you wearing it now? Do you think Jesus likes to walk out with you wearing such an ugly outfit? Do you really think it is possible to combine all that is represented in Galatians 5 in terms of the works of the flesh with all of the beauty of the fruit of the Spirit and dress yourself up like some strange ugly person and walk out into the community and not confuse the world about what it means to be a follower of Jesus? James is saying you can't do it. Because ipso facto, you cannot be both the friend of God and the friend of the world simultaneously. Jesus said it.

You cannot love God and money. Either you will love the one and hate the other, or you will cling to the one and desert the other. But you can't love them both.

Somebody wins. Dylan got it right, didn't he? You've got to serve somebody. And James is saying here, you adulterous people, do you honestly think that you can be a turncoat? Do you honestly think that you can choose to adopt a spirit of opposition to God? That you can cultivate attitudes which are opposed to God? That you can engage in activities which are clearly contrary to his will and not become his enemy? It can't be done.

Where something is clearly revealed in the Bible as wrong, it is wrong, wrong, always wrong. And when I willfully look that in the Scriptures and turn my back on it and do my own thing, I choose to make myself an enemy of God. Isn't that what James is saying? You adulterous people, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

It's spiritual adultery. It's like breaking your marriage vows. It doesn't mean necessarily the end of your marriage, but it sure makes a royal mess.

It sure changes everything. All of the intimacy and the friendship that was wrapped up in that wonderful relationship has now been fractured. I spent the last week reading a book that I started, and so I decided

to finish it.

But my wife told me, she said, I've never seen you so depressed reading a book in my life. And I was reading a book written by the girl who was married in the 60s, at one time to George Harrison, and then to Eric Clapton, and then to someone else. One of the saddest books.

I don't recommend it to you at all. You may be depressed along with me. One of the saddest books you could ever read, because it is the story of profligacy and adultery and absolute mayhem.

And underneath all of the superficial rock and roll jamboree is the brokenness and the wretchedness and the tornness and the disappointment and the sadness and the emptiness of life lived contrary to the purposes of God. We cannot have it both ways. But listen, and listen carefully, and with this we finish.

Why is all of this so very important? Because of the nature of God's love for His children. He doesn't abandon those--118--to whom He has chosen to give birth through the word of His truth in order that He might make them a firstfruits of all that He has created. He's going to persevere with us and enable us to persevere.

And how does He do this? Well, He gives more grace. And a very difficult verse, 5, means perhaps this, that we should look into verse 5 and see God longing, if you like, by His Spirit with a passionate jealousy that we might be all His, that we might be His alone, so that when He sees us linked with an affection for ourselves or for our stuff or for our earthly passions and our feeble pleasures, then He doesn't say, well, I'm done with him, because after all, look what he's done, look what she's done. No, He yearns after us.

He is jealous for us to be all His. He pursues us. He comes after us.

He drops the portcullis to make it as if we will never meet Him or hear from Him again, so that in that sense of lostness and in that sense of emptiness, we may cry out for Him. Do you understand? He doesn't come immediately to make us feel good about our predicament, to make us feel good in our sin, so that we might say, oh, I love it in the pigsty, this is quite a nice place to live. I'm sure maybe more people would like to live in a pigsty.

No, He brings us to the pigsty in order that we might say, oh, this is ridiculous. This is absurd. How could someone who had loved me to such an extent look at me in this mess? I will go back to Him and I will say, I've sinned against Heaven and in Your sight.

And the Father says, come on, that's exactly what I'm talking about. And how does that happen? Because He gives more grace. He yearns for us.

He'll do all that it will take in order to persevere with us, in order that we might become the very first fruits of all He has created. Loved with everlasting love, led by grace, that love to know. Spirit breathing from above, You have taught me it is so.

Oh, what perfect peace! Oh, what grandeur all-divine! Since I know it now, I know I am His and He is mine. And because I know that I am His and He is mine, it is absurd and ridiculous that I should be involved in these fights and squabbles. And I know why it is, because in my own heart I'm trying to sit on the fence.

And I haven't been praying about it because I don't want Him to fix it, but I'm going to have to go to Him and say what the Prodigal said. And when you do, transformation, absolute transformation. Not

necessarily instantaneously, but begun and will be completed.

Because, you see, the future comes in at the rate of 60 seconds a minute. And this kind of issue is not resolved once in your life. It is constantly, constantly the issue.

When I was small, and they taught me all my choruses, for which I remain always grateful. They taught me to sing, I met Jesus at the crossroads. Remember this one? Where the two ways meet.

And Satan, too, was standing there and he said, Hey, come this way, lots and lots of pleasures I will give to you today. Well, when I was six and I learned that, you know, what would that be? I don't know. Satan was standing there and he offered me lots of pleasures, you know, like 44 packets of Starbucks.

I don't know, I don't know what it would be. When you're 17, you had a better grasp. When you're 27, it comes out in different ways.

When you're 55, it's still the same crossroads. It's still the same question. It's still the same, come on.

Hey, come here. You don't have to stay there. You don't have to obey that.

You don't have to pay attention to this. Come here. Satan, too, was standing there and he said, Hey, come this way, lots and lots of pleasures I will give to you today.

But then we had to move over to the other side of the room. But I said, No. There's Jesus here.

That's it. I said, No, there's Jesus here. Do you realize that Jesus sits in the pews, sits in every single pew, hears our singing, knows our hearts? There's Jesus here to see what he offers me.

Down here my sin's forgiven and up there there's a home in heaven. That's it. That's the way for me.

It's easy at 6. It's important at 6.30. Necessary at 7 o'clock. And, indeed, the continual irreconcilable war into which we have been plunged as a result of God's grace uniting us to his Son is a sore trial. It's a sore trial.

Because any dead fish can go downstream. Any dead fish can go downstream. But it takes a live fish, enlivened by God's truth, enabled by God's Spirit.

The pathway is the pathway of humility and the process he describes in verses 7, 8, and 9. And if God spares us, then we will look at verses 7, 8, and 9 next time. Father, thank you for the Bible. Thank you for your amazing grace which not only saves but keeps us despite our stumblings and our bumbings.

Forgive us our fights and our feuds. Forgive us our contradictions and our backslidings. Thank you for that wonderful praise reminding us that you give more grace.

And to become a recipient of your grace is in part at least to bow down in the awareness that we don't deserve it. Amazing grace. Grace that is greater than all our sins.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and remain with all who believe now and forevermore. Amen. You will also find additional free message downloads from Alistair Begg and other resources to help you grow in your Christian faith.

Again, the website is truthforlife.org. Truth for Life, where the learning is for living.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22236.mp3>
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