

Draw Near to God ■ The Reality

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of drawing near to God, highlighting the reality that God will draw near to those who seek Him. It addresses the need for believers to ask questions of Scripture, believe in the possibility of God's presence, and continually seek a deeper relationship with Him. The message encourages a thirst for God's presence and a willingness to experience His manifestations in a personal and subjective way.

Scripture: James 4:8, 2 Timothy 3:16, Acts 17:27, Hebrews 12:22

Topics: "Drawing Near to God", "Seeking His Presence"

Description

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Transcript

My title this morning, Draw Near to God, The Reality. I've dealt with the supreme need, the danger, the attitude. Today, the reality.

Specifically, the text that is prompting in this whole series is James 4 v. 8. Just the first 11 words, at least the way it is in my ESV Bible. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Father, I pray that You'd open up Your Word to us.

I ask in behalf of the brethren, I know that there's a truth here that is good to have grab hold of us, to be gripped with. And I pray that You'd do that. I pray that You'd speak.

Speak, O Lord. I ask for it in the name of Christ. Amen.

So, draw near to God, the reality. Now, I'm going to start out. We're going to deal with some questions.

Zeke talked to us about how in a certain scenario, they bring out a report card and they begin to ask questions. You know, when we approach Scripture, we should ask questions. Not just preachers should.

Preachers have to. You have to ask questions of the text. You have to ask what is there in this text that the brethren need? How am I going to feed the brethren? We have to ask what does this mean? What are the

implications? But you have to do that too.

If you're not asking questions of Scripture, then you're going to lose a lot. Simple logic. These questions I'm going to pose to you right now I just want you to apply your brains a little bit.

Just simple logic. Primarily interested in these words. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Now, who wrote this? Not rocket science. James. James wrote this.

Okay, we know what 2 Timothy 3 says. We know that all Scripture is God-breathed. Okay, we also know this, that Peter tells us that men were carried along by the Spirit to produce such things.

God-breathed Spirit-carried men speak. So that we actually get a message in unapproachable light, impenetrable glory. There's a message that comes down to us from there.

And we do well to think. We do well to stop often and remember. We're not dealing with just anything.

We're not dealing with just some article or headline coming out of the newspaper. This is God's truth. This is revelation.

Okay, are there any, just in these 11 words, are there any prerequisites necessary before God will draw near to you? Are there any conditions? You know that there are promises in the Bible that are unconditional. We often think about unconditional election. That means we didn't do anything for it to happen.

God did it. He did it all by Himself. He did it of His own prerogative according to the counsel of His will.

When we say a conditional promise, what does that mean? Yeah, is this a conditional promise? Yes. Okay, I mean, not rocket science, right? But it's critical that we think about this nonetheless. Okay, let me ask you another non-rocket science question.

If you do draw near to God, is there any possibility whatsoever that God will not draw near to you? No. What would have to be true for you to draw near to God and God not to draw near to you? Yeah, James 4.8. Could not be true. And what does Scripture say? God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He might change His mind.

Does He not say and will He not do? Isn't that what Scripture says? He speaks and it will be fulfilled? That's how Scripture speaks to us. God is saying this to you. You draw near to Me, I will draw near to you.

Okay, let's go a little further here. Another question. I know this is similar, but let's just ask it a different way.

Who must initiate this sequence of events? Us! You! You know what? You've got to love Spurgeon. You get a text like 1 Timothy 2.4. Some of you know what that is. It's God desiring that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

You know, you read Spurgeon. You read these evangelistic Calvinists and they like to take it at face value. Spurgeon really knocks John Gill, the old hyper-Calvinistic particular Baptist.

He knocks Gill because he says Gill basically undoes it. He said if you listen to Gill, you would think that the text says God does not desire. God does not will that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of

the truth.

It's like Gill just undoes it and makes it sound like it's saying the opposite. Okay, so you know what? You take a guy like Gill. Maybe some of you don't know who he is, but I used to have his works and I know who he is.

Listen to what he says about this verse, James 4.8. You can almost anticipate what he says. He says, now this is not to be understood as if men could first draw nigh to God. It's like... Okay, look, I understand the doctrine of total depravity, but you know one of the problems with the hyper-Calvinist is he always wants to go to his Calvinistic doctrine to undo what Scripture actually says.

Brethren, why would Gill emphasize that? Why say that? When James is saying the exact opposite. Why do that? Why not emphasize what James emphasizes? Perhaps James is not a very good Calvinist. I fear that some, because of their theology of impotence, they basically let precious, precious promises go.

They barely impact them. Why? Because they read over them and their theological mind is always, oh, you know what that doesn't mean. And so you spend all this time on what it doesn't mean and then you're happy that you've declared what it doesn't mean and then you go on your way.

That's not why Scripture was given to us. It was given to us so that we understand what it does mean. What is it saying? Brethren, listen to it.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. If I desire the favor of God, I need to draw near. If I desire the presence of God, I need to draw near.

You have no right to hope for God showing up while you prefer to remain at a distance. That's not the case. Not by this verse.

Not at all. James, how? Let's talk to James a second. James, how could you possibly do this? How could you begin with a statement that begins with me? How could you do that? James, don't you know God has to initiate? James, don't you know that what Paul says over in Romans 3 that no one understands and no one seeks God? James, don't you know that? Brethren, how badly we need to take Scripture at face value.

You know what James does? He does precisely what the Lord Jesus Christ does. What's that? He appeals to our free will. He said, let him who is thirsty come.

Take the water of life without price. What's he doing? He's appealing to our free thirst. That's how Scripture appeals to our responsibility.

It appeals to our logic. It appeals to our understanding. It appeals to our desires.

It appeals to our want to, doesn't it? I mean, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. This is how Scripture speaks to us. And brethren, what I want to do is not undo what James is saying.

I want to emphasize what James is saying. James is saying something. Now, here's the thing.

Here's my next question to you. Do you believe in the possibility of this? Is this possible? If you believe in it, how do we obtain it? If it's possible, how do we obtain this? This visitation of God, God drawing near.

How do we obtain that? This is a very practical matter.

And I would just emphasize that point right there. If there's a possibility of this, how do we obtain it? Well, I would say one of the ways that we obtain it is we double back on the possibility. In other words, we've got to believe in the possibility of this.

You know, this may be one of the greatest difficulties that we're actually confronted with. Who? I'm talking about people that we care about theology. We care what this book says.

We seek to study it diligently, meticulously. People seemingly come to a place where they don't believe in the possibility, and especially in the more theological circles. Why? Because you know what happens? We become very accustomed to the purely objective.

You know what an object is. An object is that that's not me. It's that object over there.

That's what objective is. Subject, I'm the subject. Subjective has to do with me.

But you see what happens is, we can basically size up Christianity to where it's like this. I study my Bible. Okay, maybe I'm going to read John this week.

And so I read about somebody who lived a long time ago. Events that happened. How am I supposed to live my life? Do I just live my life on the memory of that which I covered in devotions? You see, sometimes we just boil it down to that.

Well, I read this. Or wait, should I expect God to come in and deal with me in subjective fashion by my reading of this and by my contemplating Christ walking this earth 2,000 years ago? You see, there's a difference. One is very objective where it's just like, well, yes, I'm going to study the doctrine.

And then I'll ponder that doctrine once in a while. And I'm not saying we shouldn't meditate on that. But is that all there is? You see, the object is that outside of ourself.

We can get to where it's all external. I'm okay as long as it's cerebral in nature, but that's as far as I need to go. It's got to be that objective truth, that objective theology, that doctrine that's outside of me.

Subjective can be scary. You know, you see people having subjective experiences. And I know I've been there.

You've been there? We used to have a guy that was visiting the church and he'd love to come up and tell us about his dreams. And you know, it starts making you pretty uncomfortable because you're recognizing you don't think this guy has any dreams coming from God. You're thinking they're coming from somewhere else.

And you know, you get this. You get the guy that comes up to you and says, God told me. All of a sudden, you're on the backs of your heels.

I remember one time when I went to Calvary Bible Church up in Kalamazoo, Michigan. And there was a singles group. And you know, I got involved there as a young Christian.

They got me doing certain things. They took me to my first Christian concert. I remember one of the girls from the singles group was sitting next to me.

Her name was Hope. And the guy's singing. He's up there on a stool and he's playing his guitar.

And there's a guy, everybody's standing. And there's a guy either a row up or two rows up. I don't remember how far he was.

But he is there. And you know, he's like this. He's got that very spiritual thing on his face.

And Hope says, look how godly that guy is. I said, Hope, you can't know that guy is godly. As he, we become suspect of just, but listen, I hope you do know what it is to have God so come upon you in some fashion to so fill you with joy and adoration that you've raised your hands and that you've felt indescribable glory.

Brethren, the reality is that there is reality to this. But we can become afraid. And you know what happens? We're afraid, we're afraid.

We get afraid of those groups because you come around those groups. You know, all you have to do is, I remember years ago, you know, to watch those videos on the crazies out there, the Kenneth Copelands and you know, all the crazy things that are happening and people that are laughing and they're all hysterical and that Toronto thing. And you know, you come across all that stuff.

And movements, and they seem to emphasize these experiences and they express it. And there's outward emotion. And they speak of these personal encounters of God.

And so suddenly it's like, especially when there's false doctrine mixed with it. And it makes us very suspect. We're afraid, we're afraid.

We're afraid of the supernatural. We're afraid of the mystical. We're afraid of feelings and impressions.

They become suspect to us. People that talk about hearing from the Lord. And you know this is true.

And you know how you can know this is true? You can test yourself by Scripture. If somebody came to you and they said, last week I had a baptism of the Holy Spirit. See, you'd look at that and probably most of you would say, what? You know, twist your face, raise your eyebrows.

And yet that's biblical language. You see, if people come around even talking biblical language like being filled with the Spirit, we get all nervous. Do you even believe in the possibility of God visiting you? I mean, all that that could mean that God draws near to you.

I know there are circles where everything is crazy emotion. I know that there's two extremes here. But Christianity is not just for the intellect.

I mean, listen, the Apostle. There in Romans 14. The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.

What is it? Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. That's subjective. Joy unspeakable and full of glory.

That kind of stuff is subjective. That's experiential. Brethren, to have joy where you can't even put it in words, it's so full of glory, that's how Scripture speaks.

Now, you need to be careful here. We all need to be careful. Christianity is about the intellect, but it's more.

It brings in the sensibilities. It brings in experience. Absolutely, it does that.

And listen, what did Scripture say when Jesus went to His own hometown in Nazareth? He did not do many mighty works there. Why? They're unbelief. Be careful, brethren.

Be careful. The last thing we want to do is limit. James 4.8 Because of our unbelief.

Don't quench the Spirit of God by putting your own carnal human limitations on what this can mean, on the possibilities that exist in this language. What does it mean to have God visit you? To have God come? To have God arise? To have God drop down from above? To have God draw near? Don't limit the possibilities here. We've got to be open to these possibilities.

May God's Spirit sweep the unbelief right away. Is our walk with God simply to be one of objective truth? Truth, yes. Objective truth, yes.

But does it stop there? Is that it? Is that all there is? Brethren, what you find is this objective truth is meant to reach out and grab a man or grab a woman. Why? Because we've got truth about a God who is personal, who is alive, who is real, who does not remain outside of us. A God who says He comes in.

He indwells us. It's subjective. He dwells with His people.

He visits His people. He surrounds His people. He communes with His people.

He blesses His people. He interacts with His people. That's what we find in Scripture.

Brethren, just think about the subjectiveness of this verse. I love this verse. If this isn't one that jumps out of Scripture at you, I hope it will from now on.

There's a psalm and it is Psalm 86. And it says this in v. 17, Show me a sign of Your favor. Oh, I love that.

The old King James says, Show me a token for good. Do you recognize what that's saying? It's saying, God, please, show me a sign that I'm an object of Your favor. Lord, show me a token subjectively.

Do things for me that show that I am indeed one that Your Son died for. Lord, please, do that. Do that for me in a subjective sense which will be an evidence that I'm an object of Your love.

This is subjective Christianity. Do for me. Answer me.

Prove that You are real in my life near me. Have bought me with the blood of Your Son. Let there be such a manifest arising of God so that people that are watching me and watching my life, they may see it and be convinced there is a God in Israel.

But be convinced of more. May they be convinced that God is my God. Don't you want that? Lord, visit.

Come. Show some sign of favor. Show it, Lord.

Give evidence that You are my God. And you read through the Psalms. The psalmist says all sorts of things like you've put more joy in my heart than they have when their wine and their grain abound.

Joy. You've put that joy in there. Or you think, the psalmist also says, God, let Your face shine upon us.

That's another way to say God's drawing near. His face shines. Again, don't limit what that terminology means.

Or the psalmist says in another place, revive us again. You know that Scripture talks about refreshing. What a nice word.

Refresh. Revive. Visit.

We have to get rid of wrong ideas about God's drawing near. And I want to talk right now. I want to hit on some of these wrong ideas that Christians often have.

Here's one. Basically, that we today as Christians are at a disadvantage. See, you can think that.

You can have a tendency to think, oh, well, I read in the four Gospels. I can see John laying there beside Christ. Wow, what nearness.

I wish I had that. See, you can feel like I'm at a disadvantage here. You can feel that way.

You can feel, oh, man, we're unfortunate to live in the 21st century. Or you can look at the book of Acts. See, you can look at what it was like when Jesus walked the earth.

Or you can look at the book of Acts when the Spirit of God was first given in the days of Pentecost. And you can say, oh, I wish I lived then. But you see, a text like John 4a says you're at no disadvantage today.

And sometimes we can feel, and I have felt this and I have to acknowledge, oh, I wish I walked with Christ. I wish I was there on the day of Pentecost. I could wish that.

I could wish that I could have sat and heard Spurgeon preach or Wesley preach or Whitefield preach. You know, we can think that way. Oh, if only I had lived during the first great awakening.

But now listen, we have to get rid of those notions that we're at any disadvantage. Because Jesus said, first off He said this, it is to your advantage that I go away. Because if I don't go away, the Spirit's not coming.

It is to your advantage. In other words, it's better. Now you could say, okay, well, Acts is better.

But see, if you take Acts as just transitional and it has nothing to do with today, then you're... See, Acts only ushered in our age, the spirit age, the age of the spirit of missions unleashed upon the church. Jesus said things like this. Oh, you believe, Thomas, because you've seen? Blessed are those who believe and haven't seen.

You see, it's like living by faith. It's almost like that's even better. Or He says this, the works I do, you will do in greater works than these you will do.

Oh, that's for the apostles. That's for those ages. That's for Whitefield and Wesley and times of revival and Duncan Campbell.

He says, whoever believes in Me. You know what else He said? Whoever believes in Me. He said, from his heart flow rivers of living water.

You see, the thing is, this promise of the Holy Spirit, what are we told about the promise? What are we told about the reality here? We are told, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, says to all the people he's preaching to, this promise of the Father, the promise that they had to wait and be clothed with power from on high, that's the promise. And he says, this promise is for you, it is for your children, and it is for all that are far off. Now you remember who the far off ones? As many as the Lord our God calls.

Are you called? Brethren, you don't want to do that. Let me ask you this. One of the things when the Spirit came in that we see very definitively happen is people are born of the Spirit.

You say, well, didn't that happen in the Old Testament? I'll just say this. Of course, people being redeemed back then, that God worked in their lives. Certainly there was life.

But I'll tell you this, that when you usher out into the New Testament, you very distinctly see that one of the ministries of the Spirit of God is that He is the one who blows like the wind in the trees and He gives birth. He gives regeneration. Let me ask you this.

Did they need to be born again back then in the days of the book of Acts? Did they? Most certainly. Most certainly they needed. But hey, those early Christians, as much as they had to be born of the Spirit, does the spiritual birth that they went through and that they encountered, does that suffice for you? Is it good for you? Are you born again by proxy because they were? No.

Let me ask you this. When Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, does that work for you? Do you get that by proxy? They were clothed with power from on high. You know what? Success or failure? What success? They're a witness to the world.

It hung on that. And when that Spirit came, there was a boldness and they spoke the Gospel. We don't live any more by proxy concerning that reality, the fullness of the Spirit.

It doesn't, their fullness of the Spirit doesn't work for you and me. We've got to have this afresh. And what God is telling us, I'll draw near to You.

I'll meet You. And You're coming to me. Or this, people say, well, drawing near to God, I don't know what exactly that looks like, but I think it's primarily non-experiential.

I don't think I'll feel that if He draws near. Look, I don't know all God's workings. Who's to say what God's doing when we have no awareness of it? I can't speak to that.

But I can speak to this. I'll say this, Christ raised certain expectations. Did He not? When He was telling His disciples, look, it's to your advantage.

When I go, you guys are going to do works that I do and greater. I'm going to send the Spirit. Such things are going to happen in the church.

He built up this expectation. He built it. He spoke of you'll not be left as orphans and you're going to do these great works and you're going to be clothed with power and there's going to be rivers of living water that proceed from you all.

It's greatly to your advantage. You know what He did? He raised their expectations so high. I mean, if you could hear Him, it's like, wow! He told them to wait in Jerusalem till we'd be clothed with power from on high.

Well, this sounds good. I mean, He built this thing up wonderful. It was thrilling to imagine.

Jesus indicated they had to have this. The world was opening up before them. Here's the thing, the Spirit came.

The Spirit came! Fell on them! I want to ask you this. What'd they say? What was their response? Do you think Peter looked at John and said, seriously? Is this all He meant? Is this all there is? Is that what happened? You know what? They came down from that upper room and it says people were bewildered. Why? Tongues of fire had come on these guys.

Something had happened to them. They were empowered. There was a boldness that they had not seen before.

They were saying these guys are full of new wine. Why? Because they were acting in a way that they had not acted before. And they were acting unlike other men acted.

And something was happening. All that hype. All that buildup.

Oh, we thought something was going to happen. Something real. Something experiential.

Something subjective. But, you know, after all, it just didn't turn out to be very impressive. That's not what happened.

I'll tell you, brethren, when that Spirit came, places shook. They had boldness. Peter was released.

There were miraculous things happening. And typically, whenever the church has stepped out on the front lines, that's the kind of thing that the church has experienced. And those front lines can be right out in some dark inner city neighborhoods.

That's just a reality. Or people come to the conclusion that well, maybe this drawing near of God is a one-time event. It's almost like, well, God draws near to me when I draw to Him in genuine repentance and faith, and He draws near and He never departs.

Yeah, but you know the problem with that is right in the context, you're talking about resisting the devil and he'll flee from you. That is an ongoing reality. And so is drawing near.

Prone to wander? Lord, I feel it. And see, isn't there the necessity to have a repeated return? And you get a sense of this. Paul, he's long into his Christian walk.

He says, oh, that I may know Him. There's this constant thirst for more. And no matter how much God has come near, you want Him to come near more.

Or you've got those Laodiceans there in Revelation 3. What's being said to them? They're a church. They're a candlestick. Christ comes along.

I know they're in a miserable place. And who knows, some of their spiritual conditions are very suspect undoubtedly. But he says this, again, I'm at the door.

You have to do something. You have to open it. Isn't that interesting? Or you have the bridegroom.

Remember from the Song of Solomon? Arise, my love, my dove. He's saying that to us. That's Christ speaking to the church.

Arise. You. Come.

He calls us forth. Come away. And you know what Christ said? He said concerning manifestation.

What is manifestation? What is a manifestation? If something manifests itself, what is that? It reveals itself. It bears on your senses. It means you can see it.

You can hear it. You can smell it. You can taste it.

It's revealed itself. Here's what Christ said. He said, He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

You know, there is a connection between love for Christ, love for God, and His manifestations. It is interesting that very often it is the people with the greatest love for God who seem to have some of the greatest manifestations of God when you search through Scripture. Brethren, one of the ways we can approach is kind of like the song, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.

We can come more love to Thee. One of the places we can start by drawing near to Him is with confession. Oftentimes, we don't love Him as we wish we did.

You know, there are some people that just get this notion, well, I've got an idea about what God drawing near means, and it better fit my definition. I will not soon forget this. You may remember Paul Washer came down and preached at Community Baptist Church back in 2001.

Do you know God moved in those meetings? And there was one night when people didn't move and they were weeping. There were numerous people weeping. There was a stillness there.

God was moving. And you know they had a deacon down there who basically cried out, that's enough! His own son was weeping. And he's like, this doesn't fit my definition of how God acts.

My nice packaged Reformed Baptist definition. And so this needs to stop. There are people like that.

They just don't fit the definition. They don't want that. It's got to refer to what I think.

Listen, the God who says He is the God of the impossible, we should not be amazed when that God draws near and supernatural things happen. Isn't that what you would expect? Isn't that what it's all about when He draws near? And I don't want to limit it. I mean, you look through history.

If you really want to see, I'm not talking about looking at the crazy charismatic things. I'm saying if you really want to see, you can open your eyes. Or people have this idea, well, this is for exceptional saints only.

You know, we understand, we've heard about some of the experiences that this guy had or that guy had, but they're exceptional. Listen, do you know one thing that stands out to me? When you dive into Luke's Gospel, now I know they're famous now. I know everybody knows Mary.

I know there's a whole cult religion. But you think about Elizabeth and Mary at the time that the events of Luke 1 were taking place. You know what it is? God's ushering in the most important three decades in all

of human history.

I mean, the greatest events with regards to redemption are coming into play. The God of the universe. Where's God? Where is He? He's occupying Himself with two simple, humble women, Elizabeth and Mary.

You just got to look at that. Listen, sometimes God's visitations are not in the metropolitan tabernacle. They're out there in the woods or the field or the prayer closet where God's simple people are approaching Him.

People say, this isn't for me. You know, I'm not that person that's given to the mystical. You know, I see other people and they get pretty stirred up when they hear about Duncan Campbell and all the things that happen in that.

And I don't know, I just don't know if this... But listen, if you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. And that means something. You'll experience things that you'll be glad you experienced.

And that will make you want more. It'll make you more thirsty. If you aren't clear about the possibility of this, we really can't proceed any further because your unbelief will shut this thing down.

You've got to believe in the possibility. The question I'm asking is this, do you believe in the possibility of drawing near to God and having Him, as a result, draw near to you? I want this to influence your expectations. I want somebody to have an anticipation about what this could possibly mean.

I want somebody to look here and see an opportunity. Like, wow, I can have more, more, more, more. Maybe I can have things that I haven't had before or that I've rarely had.

I'll tell you, there's an imagery in Ezekiel 47. If you've ever read it, Ezekiel, the son of man. Son of man.

God's speaking to him. And then you have this man. He just calls him this man.

It's Christ. He comes and he begins to measure this thing. And he says, son of man, have you seen this? What is it? Oh, it's a little river, a rivulet maybe, of water coming out of the temple and it's flowing east.

And the man, he's measuring this thing. And Ezekiel says, well, he took me about a thousand, what was it, stadia? Or I forget how they measured them. And he measured it.

He said, it was ankle deep. And he went another thousand. It was knee deep.

He went another thousand. It was waist deep. He went another thousand.

And it was waters to swim in. And you know what it says about these waters? They flowed down to the sea and the water was fresh. And it says it gave life to all the creatures.

And on the sides of the river were trees with all these leaves for healing. You talk about imagery. And I would just say this.

If you've only been in this thing up to your ankles, there's a lot more. There's more. And God's beckoning you.

Come for more. Come for more. My appeal, my appeal to you, look, I'm wanting to address those of you, you feel it.

It's like the finger of God has already touched your heart. You feel that. There's a loneliness in here of soul.

You want God to visit. You want more. Maybe some of you, you've been taught in secret that what I'm saying is true.

It's like, yes, you can hear the logic. You can hear the sermon. You can hear me trying to be rational and give reasons and give proofs.

But there are some of you, your own restless heart attests to this. There's a thirst in you and you know it. You want something more.

That's proof enough. It's proof enough that what I'm telling you is true. Listen, God made us for Himself.

He made us to find our all in Him. You think about the manifest presence of God. God coming.

God showing up. That manifest presence was in the garden. Adam heard Him.

He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Manifest. And Adam ran from it.

Do you know what John 4, verse 8 is doing? It's calling you back. You can walk with Me again in the cool of the day. Come, draw near to Me.

You'll find it so. Adam hid himself from it, but ransomed men need not hide. And we need not be afraid of the holy of holies.

There's access granted. God wills that we push into His presence and live there. Brethren, this is more than a doctrine to grasp or a doctrine to hold in our mind.

We're talking about life. The Christianity of this book is a Christianity that's based on truth, yes, but it reaches out and grabs the whole man. It's a reality.

How many of us, we get prone to wander. And you know what happens in that wandering? We become content. We become content, little bothered, by this absence of some personal experience like James is talking about here.

We become content. What a wretched contentment that it should be so. You hear the psalmist.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Brethren, I'm minded to do a whole message just on this thirst because I'm afraid. It's kind of like, you know what? Sometimes I leave the apartment.

Ruby's over at Evan's apartment. I leave there. I go to my house where my office is and I go there.

And Ruby packs me up with a lunch. And she tells me, tell me when you're coming home. And she'll try to have dinner.

But you know what happens? Sometimes at lunch or no, worse. It's not the lunch. It's those chocolates you gave me.

They sit there in my office and they give me migraines. There's no question about that. I'm sitting there and I begin to, oh, and they're so good with coffee.

But you know what happens? I get home and Ruby gives me this restaurant quality meal, but I killed my appetite. And I'm afraid this happens. We eat the cotton candy of this world and the thirst of our soul.

I'm asking myself this. What is it that dulls the appetite? What is it? Brethren, if anything, John 4, 8 tells us that we are being presented with a privilege that's open to every single child of God. There's just a thin veil between us.

God is here. There is a reality. There's a spiritual kingdom and it lies all about us.

We're only separated from it by the very thinnest of veils. But you know what God is saying? It is altogether within your reach. It's there to be had.

It's there. God Himself, what does this say? Draw near to God. This is Him speaking, inspired.

God breathed. Draw near to God. It's kind of like Jesus standing at that door and knocking.

You know what it tells us? It tells us that God Himself is awaiting our response to His presence. The eternal world all around us may come alive any moment that we simply begin to realize the possibilities and then strive to press in. There's an existence.

Even if we don't perceive it, there's an existence. There's a closeness. God has said in Acts 17 to be near to every one of us.

There's an existence and there's a presence. It's there. It's objective.

It's a reality that's apart from me. But God's saying, I'll draw you subjectively into this. Simply approach Me.

And you know what happens? We find Him there already when once we awake to the possibilities of this. Listen to Hebrews. You have come.

This is you, brethren, in this life, if you're a Christian. You have already come. To Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable angels in festal gathering, to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

You have. Brethren, you know what you've got to do? You've got to avoid pushing the spiritual world into the future as though, well, I get there when I die or Christ comes. Don't do that because the Bible doesn't do that.

It is not future. It is present. You have come already.

Brethren, let's ask. God, help us. Quicken us to these realities.

Give us the spiritual senses. Give us a thirst. Make it real.

Open my eyes. Help me to behold that which I haven't. Enable me to taste and see that You indeed are good.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to You. Father, make this real to the brethren, I pray in the name of Christ. All the possibilities, may they be a reality.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/OdXevTVAKtA.mp4>

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