

A Spiritual Checkup Part 3 – Keep Oneself Unstained sermonaudio.com from the World

Epistle of James

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 1. We come this morning to our last message from the first chapter of James's letter and the third message in a series that we have entitled "A Spiritual Checkup," which we've used the title those last two verses, James 1:26 and 27 where it seems that James is encouraging the believers to whom he writes, and us in turn, to examine our spiritual health with some objective, more or less objective tests. In the same way that when you get a checkup, a physical checkup, you go to the doctor, you may feel well but there are some objective tests that are applied to you that then confirm the healthiness of your body, so an EKG, your pulse rate, the doctor checks these things, blood tests, to see how you're really doing. So James gives these tests at the end of the chapter because he wants those believers to whom he writes to be sure that they are doing well spiritually; that there can be on the surface the appearance that things are well when in reality there are some very real problems in the soul and so he encourages us in verses 26 and 27 by giving us three tests.

I want us to begin reading in verse 22 to set the context. James 1:27 is our focus but let's begin reading at verse 22.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you that your word is God breathed and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped, thoroughly furnished for every good work. We ask you, Lord, to instruct, reprove, correct, and train us by the power of your Spirit for the glory of your Son. We pray in his name. Amen.

A spiritual checkup. He basically offers three tests to us. We looked at the first two weeks ago. In verse 26, he says if you want to really see how you're doing, you look at your life and you see that, you know, you believe that you're committed to Christ, you believe that you are healthy, you are doing things that you should be doing in general, you are involved in the body of Christ, this kind of thing, how do you really know how you're doing? He says look at your tongue. Are you bridling your tongue? Is there a pattern of an unrestrained tongue in your life? That's a problem. In fact, your profession, your religion is worthless if that's the case, so he means a major overhaul spiritually and you need to address that problem.

The second test he gives in verse 27 when he says, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is to visit orphans and widows in their distress," that is, that we look at the movement of our soul, are we moved with compassion toward those in need around us, particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ? Or have we grown hardened to the suffering and the needs around us? If that's the case, there's a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

And the third area, the third test comes at the end of verse 27 when he says, "and to keep oneself unstained by the world." It is essentially saying a picture of spiritual health is a person who is moved with compassion to those around him and who is fighting against sin and the worldliness that surrounds us. It is not staining us. So you could say that the third test is essentially this: am I keeping myself unstained by the world?

To really understand that, we need to think about those words more carefully and I want us to consider in our time together this verse, this portion of this verse, under three points to really see if we are being stained by the world. First of all, our first point this morning is we need to understand what the world is. What the world is. What does James mean when he says, "to keep oneself unstained by the world," or from the world?

The world is a very important word in the New Testament. In fact, it occurs, the Greek word kosmos occurs 185 times in the New Testament and it is used in a variety of ways. Sometimes world, kosmos, means the universe. It means everything that God has created. Other times it means the earth, the place where man dwells. A third meaning is the entire mass of humanity; the world is all living people. "God so loved the world." Then the fourth way the world is used, which I believe it is being used here, is not the universe or the earth or the entire mass of humanity but the present world system; the world as a system, a philosophy, a system of thoughts and values, attitudes, priorities. The New Testament speaks of the world as the system of thoughts and values, attitudes, priorities, that is opposed to God, that is opposed to the rule of God, that is opposed to the Son of God. The world is that which is in opposition to God in its thought forms, its values, its

beliefs, its philosophies that permeate human society, that animate human society, that are directly opposed to God.

In fact, the word kosmeo, the verb from which kosmos comes from, the Greek verb is kosmeo which originally meant to arrange; to order; to bring order to something, and it was used when the primary usage is early uses of this word, this verb was to marshal an army; to organize your army; to arrange an army in battle formation. You can picture the general in distributing his soldiers on the battlefield. "I want the swordsmen over here. The pike men over here. The cavalry over here." That's kosmeo and so kosmos has the sense of almost this military overtone, the present world system in opposition to the kingdom of God; a revolt, and that revolt is carried out in the battle of the mind, in the human mind, in the deception that permeates our world today. We see it in the way that people, the things that they value, the things that they believe about life and its meaning and purpose, and we see how these things are opposed to God's view of the world and our purpose for existing. Complete antipathy. Complete opposition.

The passage that was read earlier from 1 John 2:15 and 17, John in fact, is the author in the New Testament who uses the word kosmos/world in this sense more than anybody else. I said there are 185 uses of the word kosmos in total in the New Testament, 102 are in the writings of John: John's Gospel, 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation. Paul, I think, uses it about 45 times too. And they use it, different people, they all use it this same way but John really hammers that home and you heard it in the passage we read earlier, you heard the word "world" over and over. Again, 1 John 2:15, he says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You can't love the world and love God at the same time. Why? Verse 16, 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

So where did it come from? Turn over a couple of pages or a page or so to 1 John 5:19, John writing to believers says, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." The reason the world is this organized thought forms of rebellion against God is because Satan is, as 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, the god of this age, the god of this world. Here in 1 John 5:19, the whole world, the whole kosmos lies in his power.

So he is deceiving. He is lying. He is planting those lies in such a powerful way that the New Testament sees our enemies. As believers, there are three enemies that we see in the New Testament that we have and they are the world, the flesh and the devil. And the flesh, it's the old man where sin dwells in us, that's the flesh. The devil himself is our enemy. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the world forces of this present darkness, Ephesians 6:12. But even the one we are fighting against is the one who is the world force. Actually that's a compound word in Ephesians 6:12, world forces, kosmokrates. The rulers of the world is what it means; those who run the world. Our battle is against those who run the world. Satan and his demons, they run the world system. When you look around you and you see all the foolishness in so many different areas, why is it there? It's because Satan is running the world and the world because Satan

is opposed to God, the world is opposed to God, and because we are opposed to God before we get saved, we are willing, complicit participants in the anarchy and rebellion against a holy God until God causes you to see by his sovereign grace. I was blind, but now I see.

So the world system, though, its ways of thinking about life. Its values. It's what we hold to be precious. And so the world system is the things that people think and value and believe. That's what the world is, the system of deception that surrounds us. We are to be in the world but not of the world.

I mean, think about the things, it's subtle and constant. Sometimes it's overt but often it's subtle. I was watching TV recently and I just saw they had a commercial about a dentist, some dental care, teeth thing, and they said, "Come to the So-and-so dental place to get the dental care you deserve." Do you know how much the phrase "you deserve" is out there? "Get the hamburger you deserve. Get the whatever that you deserve. It's time that people give you what you deserve." That permeates the world system. People believe they deserve better. "I deserve you to respect me in traffic. Deserve you to look out for me. Look out for number one." That's what the whole world is about. The world system basically tells people over and over and over again, "You are the center of the universe and everybody needs to respect that." And it comes through something as simple and silly as a dental ad. It's all over the place and that world system is out to destroy everything that God loves. And what does he love so enormously? His people. The world system is against you and me. If you belong to Christ, it is your enemy. It sees you as its mortal enemy.

You know, I mentioned Ephesians 6:12, Ephesians 2, you see this interplay of Satan and how it works itself out in the world. He's reminding believers in Ephesians 2:1, listen to these words, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world." Do you see how descriptive that is? You walked according to the course of this world. Actually the Greek says, "the age of this world." This present age, this world, there is this pattern and you are walking in it. It's like you can't avoid walking in a certain course as an unbeliever.

I remember back years ago when I first went to Six Flags as a kid and got to ride the cars, the old-time cars, and they used to have the sports cars too. Some of you are old enough to remember they had those at Six Flags. I think they still have maybe some of those, but anyway, I loved riding that. It was so cool. It felt like you were really driving, "Man, this is something." Five years old, I'm driving, "Look at me drive. Look how I'm keeping it on the road. Dad, Mom, are you checking this out? All the way around the course, I didn't get off the road." I think I figured out pretty quickly along the way that you couldn't get off the road because if you went too far, you ran up against that thing.

You were on the course that you can't get off of and the reality is that there is a course in this world that no one can depart from apart from the Gospel of Christ transforming them, and he says you used to live according to the course of this world, and he said what did that look like? The course of this world according, "to the prince of the power of the air."

You see, you were walking along the course of this world, it's according to what Satan has laid out, "of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Ephesians 2:3, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." That's the world.

Then you are made alive, he says, God being rich in mercy, made you alive in Christ. But now that you are alive in Christ, James is saying, "Keep yourself unstained from the world." The world is still out there trying to do the same thing it has always been trying to do, to oppose God and destroy everything that is precious to him, including destroying the image of God. Satan wants to destroy all human beings. He hates them. Why? Because they reflect, even in the most debased human being who is living under the tyranny of sin, giving himself as he said, as an object of wrath, there still is some resemblance of God and Satan hates that. They think he's their friend. He is their god, the god of unbelievers, but he's not their friend. He is their despot who desires their destruction and is determined to do it.

We see it in other ways, the lies, the ways of thinking about life. It's all about you. Get what you deserve. If it feels right, it is right. That's one of the major lies. It's not just that it feels good, do it, if it feels right, it must be right, by definition it is right. So sexuality, the way that sin has affected us, we no longer, our desires are all out of whack and so Satan says, "Go with that. That's the way to live." That's what the world system says, go with what feels right.

We were talking to someone recently and had been sharing the Gospel and some truth with some folks who had no exposure to Christianity and they were just astonished that someone would, that God's way was for one man and one woman for life. It was astonishing to them because they had never considered that because they were so much in the course of this world, you see. "It can't be," they think. "Surely we are supposed to be like the animals. Multiple partners, that makes sense. It feels like that therefore it must be right."

The foolishness of today, not just sexual perversion but this whole gender identity thing. Isn't it astonishing that parents are letting their children decide what gender they want to be. So whatever feels good at two years old and five years old and eight years old or 12 years old, go with that. That is insanity. I mean, those same parents that would not let their children decide what they want to eat. Hey, if you're going to let them call their gender, why don't you let them call their diet. M&Ms and Snickers every day all the time. They don't want to go to school, why are you making them go to school? Let them do what feels good to them. Be consistent. If you're going to do something much more important like their gender and re-assigning that and you're going to make them then eat according to your plan, go to school according to your plan? How stupid is that? But it seems right to a world that lives in the course of this world. You know, how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Our society is eating an elephant one bite at a time and we are getting close to the end of the elephant.

We have these views, life should be easy. You know, life is about pleasure and entertainment and all of these things. These are values that the world has and so James says if you want to keep yourself unstained from the world, you first of all have to understand what the world is. It's a system of thinking and believing and valuing that is opposed to God. That's what the world is. But to understand and check and see how we're doing, we have to secondly consider, our second point this morning is what the world does. What the world does. Here in James 1:27, we see that the world stains. We are to keep ourselves unstained, the implication is that the world wants to stain us. The King James says, "spot us." The NIV says "pollute." The root idea is a word which means to spot and the idea, of course, is staining. You put a spot on a garment, you stained it, you damaged it.

So the world wants to stain and damage us. In fact, there are going to be three subpoints under this second point: what does the world want to do? It wants to spot us but what does that mean? Three subpoints, what the world wants to do. It wants to degrade. The world seeks to degrade you and me. You see, the world wants to stain us, that is, it wants to stain our thinking. I said that this idea, beliefs, values. It wants to stain our affections. The world is actively seeking to change the way you think more and more to be ungodly in the way you think. The world wants to change what you value in a very real way every day to be more and more ungodly in what you value, what you desire. And the world is actively committed to that; it is actively seeking that on a daily basis because Satan is energizing it and his willing participants in the world system, other unbelievers, want to stain believers.

Now, we are to love them even though we hate the sin. We are to be in the world and not of the world but we have to understand what we're up against. The world wants to stain us and what that means is to degrade. Think about if you stain something. Haven't you had a shirt that you really loved and then it got a stain that didn't come out? I'm bad about sometimes I get a grease stain, you know, maybe a hamburger or something or steak and a little drip and, boy, it's gone. You wash it and you don't catch it. It's happened a few times, not that many times, my wife is good about catching that usually. She sees it when it happens. But it has and it's gone. You can't wear that. I mean, this shirt looks great on me. Look at this big stain right there. Everybody sees the stain. It's the first thing you see, isn't it? You don't say, "Nice shirt," you say, "What is that?" "Oh, it's something that happened six months ago but I'm just ignoring it."

It degrades. It devalues. So when you are allowing the world to affect the way you think, you are actually even though the world is telling you, "Hey, by thinking this way, you are improving your life, you are improving the quality of your life." But what God says you're doing is you're being degraded. You are being diminished. You are becoming less of the human being that he made you to be.

That's what the world does when it stains, it degrades and ultimately it seeks to destroy, the second subpoint. Satan, what has been his purpose all along? He's a murderer from the beginning, Jesus said. Remember he says in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." There he is saying, again, he is the ruler over all unbelievers. He's talking to Jews

there, people of the covenant but who have not been born again. He says, "You are of your father the devil." Why does he say that? Because he knows they want to kill him right then. "You're just like your dad. He has been a murderer from the beginning and you want to murder me because you are just like your dad. You are of your father the devil."

And what does the devil want to do? He says in John 10 the thief comes into steal and to kill and to destroy. That's what Satan wants to do and because he wants to do that, sin wants to do that and the world system wants to destroy everything that God has made that is good, including your soul. In fact, it's interesting how you see this so clearly in so many places. 1 Peter 2:11. This shows you how the flesh, "abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul." So you give in to a fleshly lust, you think, I mean the way that Satan packages it, well, you just did what's natural and you feel better and so everything is okay. No, you have just cooperated with the warring against your soul. Something has been radically affected. It has been diminished, degraded, and the ultimate goal is to destroy you.

The third point, even most importantly besides the world wants to degrade, it wants to stain so that it degrades, it devalues, it wants to stain so that it can destroy, but most importantly, it stains so that it can defile. That's sort of the imagery that is predominant here, I think, in James's mind. He says, "Pure and undefiled religion," in verse 27, "in the sight of our God and Father is this," he's using imagery of the temple, the tabernacle, worship in God's presence. Pure and undefiled, we said last time pure really means clean. Clean and undefiled religion and that word undefiled there means stained also, unstained. It's a word, undefiled there literally means to add tincture with dye. To add color with a dye. So like you intentionally, you know, add dye but there's sometimes where you don't want to dye some things. You're working on this fabric and you don't want to get it over here and ruin that one. He says that pure and undefiled religion, he says, clean, ceremonially clean and unstained worship of God is this, then he comes back to that idea of no spot at the end so he is like emphasizing it. So he's saying that when we give in to sin, when we let the world system affect our thought processes, it's hindering our ability to live in the presence of God.

Now the believer, sin cannot ultimately separate you from God but it can bring about a separation in your experience of the Lord's fatherly pleasure and communion because as a holy Father, he longs for our holiness. So there is a separation that happens when we sin, and particularly when we continue in sin, when we continue to think unbiblically areas of our lives are affected and somehow, we are brought apart from the fullness of God's blessing and presence. So it defiles. These wrong thought processes defile us.

So what the world is, it's this thought that is opposed to God. What the world does, it stains, it degrades, destroys and defiles. Thirdly, what we must do. "To keep oneself unstained," that's the third point, what we must do to live before God in holiness, we must labor to keep ourselves unstained. That verb "keep oneself" is an important verb. It means to guard; to attend to; to watch over. It could be used of a warden or a prison guard watching someone so they don't escape. It can also be used of a guard who is guarding

some property they don't want stolen. So it's kind of like keeping something from escaping, either a bad guy from escaping from the custody or something good from being stolen by bad guys. But either way, you are watching it. Like the idea of many scholars is the etymology of that word comes from a word which means to look with great care and intention at. The verb theoreo, it comes from that.

So the idea is that we are to give great attention and watching over our unstainedness. You know, there are certain times where you have to be careful. Like you are handling bleach, you're going to put some bleach in a spray thing to spray the house or whatever, right? You are more careful with that and you should be than you are with some other things, and we ought to always be careful with whatever we are handling, right? But, man, bleach, if you get that, you've got a stain that is a reverse stain that's just ruined your pants or your shirt, right? So you take care.

The idea is, in fact this verb is in the present tense. He's saying to keep oneself really means to go on continually keeping yourself unstained from the world. To keep on keeping yourself unstained. It pictures you are in a situation where stains are all around you, potential stains are all around you and you are having to watch yourself. It's like you are walking through an ink factory or something, I don't know, and you are having to go sideways and turn around and do like this and you are constantly aware that there is a potential stain to happen. That's the picture. How quickly we can be stained.

Not too many weeks ago a Sunday after church, we were eating with some folks at Panera, and I lost, I was wearing a tie, and you guys know where I'm going with this, maybe you wives do too, but I put my food down and I'm sitting down and the tie I was going to wear today, honestly, I got the tie out, had it ready to put on and there I saw that stain on the bottom of the tie, black bean soup from Panera bread. It was a green tie. I was going to wear the green tie today. But, you know, I didn't wear it. Why? Because it is stained. It's not fit to be worn. It's got to be cleaned. And how did it get stained? For a moment I wasn't guarding it. Sometimes you'll see guys do this when they are eating, you know. Or you'll see them just hold on to their tie when they are sitting down. I wasn't doing that and how quickly the stain, just like that. He says we have to guard ourselves. We have to guard our thinking, the things that we value. We have to be vigilant, constant, looking after the health of our souls because every moment there is an assault happening.

A passage I think helps us unpack this a little more is Romans 12:2. Paul is thinking about something very similar to what James is talking about here, to keep oneself unstained from the world. It's so much like what Paul says in Romans 12:2 when he says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Do you see the picture here? The world wants to conform you into its mold. It wants to force you and me to go along its course and it does that by subtly lying to us and changing and continuing to feed things that our own flesh wants to do and things that we used to believe.

And it seeks to conform us, the idea of that conforming, in fact that's a present tense verb again, which means continuous action, ongoing action. Actually you would translate do not be being conformed like this, by stop being conformed. Stop being conformed to this world but be being transformed. That is, the world is trying to conform you, it is trying to force you into its mold. In fact, the word there conformed is from a verb which has the word scheme in it. The scheme, the orientation, the pattern. The world wants to make you fit its scheme and it is trying to force you into its scheme and that action is continual and if you are not addressing that every moment, you are being conformed. The picture here is if you're not being transformed, you are being conformed. There is no neutral. You are either going forward or you are going backward. And he's agreeing with James on how you go about it. How do you keep yourself unstained from the world? How do you keep yourself from being conformed? Here he says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," but back in James 1 what does he talk about this? In the context of being doers of the word, not hearers only. Dwell in the word. Let the word change you.

You know, this is such a profound thing and we just don't see how urgent the battle is. Satan will try to lull us to sleep. "It's not that big a deal. I'll deal with it tomorrow. I'll meditate more tomorrow, next week." And we allow ourselves to be conformed to the world, stained.

You know, the world is telling us every moment of every day that God is not for us, that his law is against us. The world says things like this: freedom is found in giving in to your lust. That's what the world says. Freedom is found in pursuing your pleasures. Freedom is found in being a man of the world, and being sexually promiscuous as a man or a woman. Freedom is found in giving in to those desires that you may feel. You may have same-sex attraction. The world says give in to that. That's where freedom is.

And the world has been saying all along you can't trust God, you can't trust God, he's not out for you and your good. His law is so unreasonable. This is what the world says. Like I said, the person who says one man and one woman for life, what? That seems so unnatural. And there is a sense in which each one of you, no matter how much you love the Lord, there is something in the fallen man that resonates with those kind of lies and transformation happens as you believe God and take him at his word and you meditate on it so that the faith that you have in it grows and grows and you become mighty in the Scriptures and then you come to understand later that, "Yes, I know that what I used to believe almost in the dark." Because what happens is in areas of our lives where we have been stained, the believer who has come to know Jesus Christ and has come to repent of his sins and place his faith in Christ believing that Jesus has paid for your sins completely, trusting in his death, his atoning death in our place, his resurrection, nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's right, you are righteous before God forever but sin has consequences and sin will stain you and stains are not easy to get out. And God ordains it that way so that we would be humbled and broken, because we would be very superficial in our repentance if it was easy to get out of those stains.

You know, I mentioned sometimes you have a problem and something gets stained, haven't you washed something again and again, you treat it again and again and again and again? Sometimes you can finally get that stain out and hopefully there is still some fabric left when you get done with it, right? It's not easy to get stains out and sin stains our soul, it stains our mind, and it takes time and it takes effort. It takes faithful repentance and trusting in Jesus Christ, dogged determination, all along the way trusting in his grace. Only by grace can you do it but the Lord's grace works so that as he says in Philippians 2:11 and 12, work out your salvation in fear and trembling. Work it out in fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you. That's the balance. Get rid of that stain trusting that God is the one helping you get rid of that stain.

But what does that look like, getting rid of a stain like this? Like I said, you give in to sexual immorality, pornography, how damaging and how staining that is. And the statistics tell us that so many people and more and more people are struggling with that because it's so easy to get to and Satan says it's only one time and so you take that step and there is something that happens when you give in to a new level of sin, you cross a threshold that there is a stain that even though by grace you can be forgiven of that and you can walk in holiness, there is something that makes it easier to go back that way. There is a staining of the soul.

So the message is don't be stained. Stop it at the door and don't go there, but if you are there, the answer is still the word of God. The answer is to humble yourself and to share with a brother or sister your need and ask them to pray for you. That's what we all want to be about, helping one another. None of us is above sin. I struggled with sexual sin in my own past in years back. I know how wicked it is and how ugly it can be to give in to lust and those kinds of things. It's just awful. It stains and it can destroy. You give it too much, it can destroy a marriage, it can destroy your ministry.

But what do you do to get unstained now? You go to the word. You become accountable to other believers, especially if you are in a stain that is pretty stained, you are going to need help to get the stain out, not just in sexual sin, in other areas where you really feel like a sin has overtaken you. Galatians 6 says, "If anyone is overtaken in sin, let those who are spiritual lift them up, help them out, but watch yourself."

It takes applying the word to your life in a very practical and consistent and persistent way. In the area of sexual sin, all the lies that Satan tells about it are lies and at first when you're walking out of that, it feels like you're in the dark and the word of God is like a little faint candle. God says, "This way to life." Think about a person who is trying to come out of a life dominating sin and they have believed the lies, they know that they are miserable, they can understand they feel degraded, they feel the destruction happening but how do they get out? They have to believe the word. They have to believe that God knows best, that when God made me a man, he made me a man, when God made you a woman, he made you a woman, and your feelings don't overrule that. And you believe that God is sovereign and God is good and he has a plan. And you stop believing that God's word is against you and you start believing it's for you.

That is the most, it is the most obvious thing in the world and it seems so counterintuitive in a fallen world. God made us, did he not? Does he not know how he made us? Does he not know how he hard-wired us? Does he not know that he hard wired us for one man, for one woman for life? Is that not how he hard wired us? Does that mean that our souls don't work best in that? I mean, you can buy something at the store, like say a weed eater, and if it says a gas/oil mix, you had better use a gas/oil mix. If you use gas, you will be weed eating for not very long before you've got to go and buy another weed eater because the manufacturer knows how he made it to be operated. God is the manufacturer. He is good.

He knows how he made us and the things that are wrong with us, they are not his fault, they are our own fault and the problems in this world, and the fact is his commandments are delightful. And, like I said, when you have been in a dark place, that seems like a faint candle across the room. God's word is delightful. It doesn't feel delightful. Forget what it feels like, put all of your hope in the faithfulness of God and say with Paul, "Let God be true and every man found a liar. I don't care if the whole world is telling me to go this way, God says that way. I'm going toward that candle." And if you walk toward that candle and you keep walking toward God's word, what happens is you will find over time he will confirm his word and you will delight in his law. The psalmist, Psalm 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Actually in the Hebrew the word is repenting or returning the soul. "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring," would be a good translation. It takes the soul back to where the soul belongs. It doesn't take it away from where it belongs, it takes it back.

The world and the lies of the world degrade and destroy. God's commandments, when you walk in his commandments, you are walking in the thing that your soul was made for and you will feel the joy and delight of holiness. God made it that way and how wonderful it is to have in different areas of your life, those of you who love the Lord, haven't you seen areas where you used to believe something at a certain level and yet this is the right way, and now you walk in it and you say I believe it like this. His word is true. I mean, he is so wise in making one man and one woman for life. What a treasure it has been to be married to my wife. I delight in her more every day and I rejoice that God has given me her as my help mate to walk through life together giving glory to him. Until the day we die, one of us dies, we're going to walk together like that and that is the most delightful place to be in all the world. Forget what they say, forget what they advertise everywhere. They don't know any better. They are blind. They can't see. They have been lied to. The truth is here, no matter what you're struggling with.

The psalmist, Psalm 119, read Psalm 119 and just look at how lovely the law of God is to the psalmist. Here's a guy who has learned to walk in the truth. He says things like Psalm 119:32, "I shall run the way of Your commandments, For You will enlarge my heart." I mentioned he started off here looking at that little faint glimmer, the psalmist is saying, "Man, I'm running to God's commandments now. I'm thrilled. I can't wait to obey him." And all the way he is enlarging your heart as you start striving toward the faintness of God's word, trusting in it, he will enlarge your heart and he will fill your heart with more and more joy.

James says we must keep ourselves unstained from the world. It's too much at stake. If you allow the stains to start in your mind, eventually they will stain your life and they will make you increasingly less useful to God and increasingly less human and joyful as a Christian. We have to see what the world is, what the world does, and we must be vigilant. May God help us to offer to him increasingly pure lives and have the joy of purity and holiness.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you that you are perfectly good, that your commandments are not burdensome but they are our life. Everything that you have set down, Lord, teach us to walk in it. Father, we pray for those that you have put your finger on here today that are stained, that are in the dark, that feel the weight and the ugliness of sin pressing them down. Lord, let them look to Christ. Let them look to a Savior who came in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin and he condemned sin in the flesh. He is the way out. His truth, his commandments but most of all his cross and his resurrection. Give them grace to run to Jesus, give them grace to trust him. Those that haven't been saved, may today be the day of salvation. May they become your child by faith in Christ. For those that belong to you but have grown distant from you, hardened, restore to them the joy of their salvation. Show them, Lord, how to mourn over their sin and how to trust in your word. Help them humble themselves with other believers, another friend, an elder, someone they can open up to. And Father, lead them in righteousness for your name's sake. Father, we thank you that you are more zealous for our holiness than we are, infinitely more committed to it than are we in our best moments. We thank you that you have promised that he who has begun a good work in you, will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. Do your work. Finish your work. All for the glory of your name and the glory of your Son. We pray in his name. Amen.