

(Through the Bible) James 3-5

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being careful and straightforward in handling God's Word, controlling our tongues, and seeking God's will in our lives, and warns against the dangers of loving the world more than God and resisting the devil.

Duration: 1:08:16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith And Consequences"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the negative behaviors and actions that people engage in, as described by Paul in the book of Romans. He emphasizes that not only do people commit these acts, but they also take pleasure in them, such as watching violent content on TV and in movies. The speaker encourages listeners to focus on sowing to the spirit rather than the flesh, by incorporating uplifting and spiritual music into their daily lives. He also shares a personal anecdote about a rainstorm at a summer camp and how he prayed for the rain to stop, demonstrating the power of faith. The sermon concludes with a warning about the consequences of living a life of pleasure and fraud, as described in the book of James.

Transcript

Let's turn to James chapter 3. James, first of all, warns against a desire to teach the Word of God that would stem or emanate just from your own desire to be in front of people or whatever. My brethren, he said, be not many masters or teachers. The idea of master there is a teacher.

Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. Teaching the Word of God is an awesome responsibility. Because when I stand here to teach God's Word, then I am responsible to be teaching the Word of God correctly.

For if I do not teach the Word of God correctly, then those people that I may be leading astray will be people for whom I will have to bear a responsibility. It's a heavy obligation to be a teacher of God's Word. Now, you can teach any other subject.

Doesn't matter if you are teaching something that will later on be proved to be wrong. But if you're teaching the Word of God, the consequences of the false teaching are so vast that as the teacher you will be held responsible. So, don't be many masters knowing that we will receive the greater condemnation.

That is why I seek to be so careful in teaching the Word of God to keep as much as possible my own opinion out of it and speculation out of it completely. A lot of times people want you to speculate on a subject. And to me that's extremely dangerous.

There is a danger always in approaching the Scriptures with a certain mind set. I have a particular doctrine that I have embraced, I adhere to. And though there are Scriptures that would seemingly contradict the position that I believe in, I then feel a necessity of somehow explaining away those Scriptures.

That's dangerous. I don't think that we should meddle or tamper with the Word of God. I think that we should keep it just as pure as possible as we seek to teach the Word.

And so James warns that if we take upon ourselves that position of teacher, just know that along with that position goes that awesome responsibility and that one day we will have to give an account before God of how straightforward we were in handling His Word. Now, the Bible warns of those who handle the Word of God deceitfully and I have met so many people that handle the Word of God deceitfully. Now James is going to talk to us about something of which we all have a problem now or then and that's our tongues.

For in many things, he said, we offend all. And if any man offends not in word, the same is a perfect man and is able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouth that they may obey us and we turn about their whole body with that bit.

Behold also the ships, which though they be so great and are driven by fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor desires. Even so the tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things. Behold how great a matter just a little fire can kindle.

So in talking about the tongue, it's a very small part of our anatomy, but yet what trouble it can get us into. What fires it can spark. The tongue is something that has a capacity for great blessing or for great evil.

We can use our tongues to bless people, to build them up, to encourage them or we can use our tongues to destroy them. And he likens the tongue, though it's such a small part of the body and yet able to do such great damage, move so many things, like the bridle in a horse's mouth. Small, but yet you can move that big horse around with just a little bridle in its mouth.

The rudder on a ship. Small part of a ship, but yet it turns the ship. A huge ship turned by just a little rudder.

So our tongues can really control, in a sense, our whole lives. And especially if we don't seek to control the tongue. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

So is the tongue among our members. It is capable of defiling the whole body. It sets on fire the course of nature.

And it is set on fire of Gehenna. Now, every kind of beast and bird and serpent, things in the sea is tamed and has been tamed by man. It is interesting how that man has been able to tame all kinds of creatures.

You can tame lions, and we've seen the lion tamers, and we've watched them in the circus. Birds can be trained to talk and to say phrases. Even serpents can be trained.

And you see in India, the guy with his flute, and the boa constrictor, you know, doing its thing. And, of course, you can go down to Sea World or over to marine land and see how they've trained the fish. Man

has learned how to train and to bring into control all of these wild things in nature.

One thing man hasn't been able to tame, his own tongue. But the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil and full of deadly poison.

Jesus one day said something that is worth considering at this point. He said, It's not really that which goes into a man that defiles a man, but that which comes out of a man that defiles him. For out of the mouth comes blasphemies, evil speaking.

And then he said, It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. That doesn't speak too good for our hearts, does it? The mouth is the voice piece of the heart of man. A man reveals what's inside of him by his tongue.

And sometimes that frightens me. With the tongue we bless God, even the Father. And isn't that the highest capacity of my tongue is when I use it to praise the Lord.

We were singing tonight, the praises unto God. And that's the highest capacity for which I can use my tongue is use it to declare praises unto God. With our tongue we bless God, even the Father.

But with the same tongue we curse men who are made after the similitude or the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth there proceeds blessings and cursings. Now this ought not to be, James said.

There's an inconsistency here. Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree bear olive berries? Can a vine bear figs? So can no fountain both yield salt, water, and fresh. And so there's a paradox in our tongue.

It's different from anything else. From the same mouth there can come glorious praises unto God and horrible curses unto man. The tongue.

God help us that we might be so yielded to the Spirit that He would do for us what we can't do for ourselves and that is bring our tongue under control. I've said so many things that I wish I had not have said. Said in a moment of anger.

How I wish I could have taken them back. And there are a lot of things that I wish I had said that I didn't. Word of encouragement.

A word of forgiveness. A word of comfort. You know sometimes we just don't want to give the person that consolation of saying well that's alright.

I understand. Oh if I'd only said it though. I could have saved them so much mental anguish and turmoil.

I could have let them know that it really didn't matter. Now he goes on to another subject and that is of true wisdom. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him demonstrate it by his manner of life.

By his works with a meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, that's not wise. Don't glory in it.

And lie not against the truth. That is a lie against the truth. The bitterness and striving and enviousness within your hearts.

For this kind of wisdom descends not from above. It's not godly wisdom. It's earthly.

It's sensual. It's devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure. Then it is peaceable. It is gentle.

It is easy to be entreated. It is full of mercy and good fruits. It's without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Oh what a difference. That wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish, envying, striving, bitterness. Now what marks your life? What kind of wisdom comes forth from you? He says that you should show forth the wisdom by your manner of living.

Demonstrate the wisdom. In reality, our manner of life does demonstrate the source of our wisdom. And if I am constantly in strife, constantly in turmoil, constantly stirred up, constantly, you know, bad-mouthing this person, that person, this thing, that thing, then that wisdom that I have is not of God.

For the wisdom that comes from God has such marvelous characteristics. It's pure. It's peaceable.

It's gentle. Easily entreated. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

So this is just good, practical advice for getting along with people. This chapter could be entitled, How to Win Friends and Influence People. Guard your tongue.

Bring your tongue under control. Use it for good. Use it to encourage.

Use it to build up. Don't use it to tear down, to destroy, to cut, to hurt. Your wisdom, let it be godly wisdom.

Let it be demonstrated in your manner of life. That is, your life, let it be pure. Let your life be peaceable, merciful.

Now this fruit of righteousness that we desire is actually so peace and that fruit of righteousness will come. It's sown in peace of them that make peace. And so seek to live in peace with each other.

Fruit of righteousness will come forth. But in contrast to the peace, where do the wars come from? The fighting among you. The strife.

Do they not come from your own lust that is warring in your members? You lust and you have not. You kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not.

Here James is declaring that most of the problems of man comes basically from man's greed. And I would have to concur with this. I think that this is the failure of our society.

I think that this is the failure of government. Man's greed sooner or later gets in and corrupts. And how corrupting is the greed of man? How it corrupts government? It's a horrible thing of greed and it's behind the wars.

It's behind the fighting. It's behind the strivings. That desire to have what belongs to someone else.

The fighting, the wars among you. And yet, we have not, he said, because we ask not. You know, a lot of these things that we desire, if we would just really ask the Lord about them.

And if it is right, God will give it to us. If it's not right, He won't. Because you can ask and receive not, because you ask and miss just to consume it on your own lusts.

You see, people misunderstand the purpose of prayer. The purpose of prayer is never to get your will done upon the earth. And yet, how often we think of prayer as just that.

The agency by which I can get my whims and wishes accomplished. Now Lord, I want you to do this and I want you to do that and I've got this list here, Lord, of things I want you to do before Friday. And we think of prayer as a marvelous agency by which I can get all of my wishes and all of my desires accomplished.

I thought of prayer in this light for years. I was always trying to make deals with God. Now you do this and I'll do this, you know.

How can you lose? Trying to strike a bargain with the Lord. And I used prayer or sought to use prayer as a means by which I could fulfill my desires. I know a lot about this verse.

You ask and receive not, because you ask and miss to consume it upon your own lusts. I prayed for some of those beautiful custom cars that used to drive around Santa Ana when I was in high school. Man, how I prayed for some of those cars.

Well, they were for sale. But believe me, I was wanting it to consume it on my own lusts. Oh, I tried to strike a deal with God.

I told him I'd pick up kids and take them to Sunday school. You know, Lord, we'll give you the use of it a couple of hours a week after all. But boy, did my mind have plans for the rest of the way.

Cruising down Newport Beach. So many of our prayers have selfish motivation behind them. And many times the selfish motivation is actually hid from us.

But if I really begin to probe, I find that behind the prayer there's a very strong selfish motivation. Here's my son. He's going astray a little bit.

He's doing things that I don't approve of. I wish he weren't doing these things. I'm becoming concerned.

He's coming in too late at night. He's running with bad companions. Oh God, turn my son around.

Bring him to a real commitment to Jesus Christ. In the deep, deeps of my heart I'm thinking, what if he should get in trouble? Be arrested? Boy, what kind of headlines would that make? Pastor's son arrested. It would be a disgrace to the family.

We'd have to go through the embarrassment of him being in jail. Oh Lord, save him, you know, bring him around. But what am I really thinking, you see? Here's the husband, not walking with the Lord.

Oh God, save my husband. Lord, help him to really make a commitment to Jesus Christ. In my heart I'm thinking, oh it would be so nice if he were saved.

I think he would treat me nicer. He'd probably say grace before the meals, and I think it's so wonderful when a family says grace before the meals. And he'd even go to church with me, and oh, I wish he were sitting by me in church.

Oh Lord, save my husband. You see, it's not that he's a rebel against God, and he's going to be destroyed if he's not changed. It's not really for him, it's for the conveniences that it might bring to me.

Prayer is not an agency by which my will is to be accomplished upon the earth. The purpose of prayer is to get God's will accomplished upon the earth. And so many times we ask and receive not, because the motive behind our asking is really that of accomplishing my will rather than God's will.

And if my will is in conflict with God's will, God is not going to change His will to accommodate me, for God is not subservient to me. I am subservient to Him. And the purpose of prayer is never to change the mind of God, to see things my way.

It isn't to persuade a reluctant God to do things my way. The real thrust and purpose of prayer is to get God's will done. That's why many times we ask and receive not, because we ask amiss.

Our own desires are too much entwined into it. Now, speaking in a spiritual sense, he said, you adulterers and adulteresses. This is talking in a spiritual sense, not physical in this particular passage.

There are other passages that speak about it in a physical sense, but this happens to be spiritual, because it is dealing with the love that is in your heart. The love for the world and the worldly things. You have been joined to Christ as His bride.

Your chief love is to be directed towards Him. He is the one to whom you have been joined in marriage. And if you begin to love something other than Him, more than Him, then you have committed spiritual adultery in your heart.

As God in the Old Testament was constantly accusing the people of Israel of adultery when they began to worship the other gods. So, God speaks here against your love for the world. Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? And whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Do you think that the Scriptures speak in vain? The question mark should be there. And probably the second should also be in question. Does the Spirit that dwells in you lust to envy? Now, surely the Spirit of God doesn't lead us to envy.

It doesn't desire to envy. The Scriptures do not speak in vain. The love of the world, the things of the world, is spiritual adultery.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For he that hath the love of the world in his heart hath not the love of the Father. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, are of the world and are not of God.

Coupled, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? If you're going to be a friend of the world, if you're going to be doing the worldly things, engrossed in worldly things, caught up in worldly things, your heart is in the worldly things, you're putting yourself in the position of being an enemy of God. But God gives more grace. Wherefore, he saith, God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Therefore, submit yourselves to God. And resist the devil. Now, it is the devil that seeks to entice us to find fulfillment in the world by lying to us and telling us that we can find all of the contentment and joy and happiness that we desire if we will just turn from God's path and walk after our own desire and flesh.

Satan's appeal is so strong because he appeals to that which I am interested in, my flesh, the desires of my flesh. And he basically is saying, Hey, go for it. You'll find the fulfillment.

You'll find the excitement. You'll find what you're looking for. Just go for it.

Go for the flesh. And God is saying, No, that's death. If you really want life, spiritual life, then seek after the Spirit and the things that are of the Spirit.

Walk after the Spirit. There is a warfare between your flesh and your spirit. And Satan is there to encourage you to go after the Spirit.

And the Lord is there to encourage... I mean, he's there to encourage you to go after the flesh. The Lord is there to encourage you to go after the Spirit. So submit yourselves to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you.

I like that. I think that many times our problem is just that we aren't really standing up for right. We're not really resisting as we should the devil.

I think that there are important keys in life and in this spiritual life and in this warfare that we're in. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against these principalities and powers. And I think the first thing is the recognition that they do exist.

And I think that we need to recognize the source of the attack against us. Many times we can't really deal with it because we don't recognize that this is a spiritual battle and I'm really involved in a battle against this force of evil, this spirit of evil, Satan himself or one of his emissaries. Once I recognize the source of my problem then I can begin to deal with it.

But so many times we just are prone to sort of pass it off. Well, I'm just irritable today. I just feel miserable.

I'm just ready to chew up anybody that gets in my way. Out of sorts. I didn't get enough sleep last night or something.

And we don't recognize that, hey, this is a real spiritual conflict. This whole thing that I feel, this heaviness and all, is actually a satanic force, a power that's trying to defeat me. Now if I fail to recognize it I can just go on in this miserable way all day long.

But if I recognize, hey, this isn't of God. This isn't of God's Spirit. This isn't how God would have me to be.

This is an attack of Satan against me. Recognizing it, then I deal with it by resisting it. Resisting the devil and he will flee.

And then the third R is rejoicing. So recognize, resist, and then rejoice in the victory that we have in Jesus Christ over every principality and power that might come against us. I don't have to be irritable.

I don't have to be cranky. I can resist the devil, that mood, that spirit that he's trying to bring me under. And I can rejoice for I have full victory in Jesus Christ.

And it's amazing how it can change the whole atmosphere around you. Now the second part of this is draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. You see, here I am.

I'm in this midst of the battle here. Resist the devil, he'll flee, but on the other hand, draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to you. I love that.

All I have to do is just start drawing near to the Lord. It's so important. It's how we program our minds.

It's so important what we're feeding into our minds. And God help us in this corrupt age in which we are living with all of the technology that has brought into our homes such filth. Television has been a purveyor of such evil.

It can be good. Television itself, I mean, it's a thing. It's not evil in itself, but it has the capacity of bringing evil into your mind, into your life, and it also has the capacity of bringing good, but it's how you control it, where your dial is turned.

But I think of the evil that we will program into our minds as we sit there and watch the TV. And it's terrible. No wonder we're having all of these marital problems and immorality just flooding our nation.

It's being planted into the minds of people day after day as they watch TV. Murders, thievery, adultery, the whole thing, it's all there. And Paul, when he made the list there in Romans of these horrible things that people were doing, he said, not only do they do them, but they take pleasure in those that do.

And how is it that a person takes pleasure in watching someone snuff someone out? On TV, in movies. People pay to see that kind of filth. Pay to pollute your mind.

And then we get caught up with the law of nature. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. I'm sowing to the flesh.

I begin to reap of the flesh. Envy, striving, seditions, murder. How well if we would just get good, inspiring music and play it in our homes.

What a difference it makes. What a difference it creates within the atmosphere. You see, we're sowing now to the Spirit.

If in the morning, as your children are getting ready for school, they come in for breakfast, there's praise music on or maybe one of the kids' albums on. You're planting into their minds and into their hearts the things of the Spirit. God knows when they get to school, they're going to get all kinds of crud thrown at them.

We need to counterbalance it within the home rather than allowing them to listen to a lot of this junk music with filthy lyrics. That we would actively encourage them by ourselves, playing and listening to inspiring music. Again, Whatsoever man sows, that shall he also reap.

And if you have that kind of an atmosphere sowing to the Spirit, you're going to reap of the Spirit. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded.

You know, that's the problem. David said, Lord, unite my heart to serve Thee. The divided heart.

That's the problem with so many people. Yes, I want to serve the Lord. Yes, I want to follow Him.

Yes, I want to spend eternity with Him. And yet, another side of me wants to go after the flesh and indulge the flesh. Be afflicted and mourn.

Weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, your joy to heaviness. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up.

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brethren and judges his brethren, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you are a judge of the law, then you're not a doer of the law, but a judge.

And there is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. And who are you to judge another? So, forego that condemnation or judgment on another. You're not a judge of the law.

We're to be the doers of the law, obedient to the law. Go to now ye that say today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain. Because you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

For what is your life? It's only a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Therefore, you ought to say if the Lord wills. And if we live, we will do this or that.

So, that exhortation by James to us to take into consideration God's will in all of our planning. To make that a contingency to every plan. It isn't that you shouldn't plan the future, but you should always have the contingency the Lord's will, if it's the Lord's will.

Because I don't know what tomorrow holds. I don't know whether or not I will even be here tomorrow. But if the Lord wills, this is what I desire or this is what I plan to do.

If the Lord doesn't will it, then I don't want to do it. But that should always be a contingency to any plan that I make. I need to realize that my life is short.

It's just a vapor that appears for a moment and then vanishes. I'm here for just a short time. That I need to spend the time that I'm here in something that is worthwhile.

Something that will last eternally. Too much of our life, too much of our effort, too much of our time is spent in things that are not eternal. Things that are going to pass away.

Too many people spend their life eating cotton candy. It may be sweet, but there's no substance. It dissolves.

It's gone. So many things that you do, things of the flesh, things for the flesh, they're dissolved, they're gone, they're wasted. I have so many times come to the end of a day and thought, what a wasted day.

Usually it's New Year's Day after I've watched all the football games. And you finally get to the Rose Bowl and the Big Ten won. Oh, what a wasted day.

You know, used up a lot of emotion and everything else, but all I did was just sit around all day long, eat and watch the games. And there was a lot of things that needed to be done out in the yard. I could have spent the time more profitably.

We waste too much time. We need to spend our time more profitably in things that profit for eternity. But now you rejoice, he said, in your boastings, but all such rejoicing is evil.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, to him it is sin. In other words, sin isn't just something that I do that I shouldn't. Sin is also something that I don't do that I should.

Oh, I know I ought to do it. Oh, I know I ought to go over there and help him out. But I don't.

To him that knows to do good and doesn't do it, that's sin. The sin of omission. The failure to do that which I ought to do.

Now in chapter 5, he first of all takes on the rich. So this doesn't apply to many of us. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver is cankered, and the rest of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire, for you have heaped up treasure together for the last days. So, he speaks of the rich and heaping up treasure for the last days, talking of their gold and silver. And to me, it's extremely fascinating how that the rich people have to worry about the security of their money.

What is safe? What is a safe investment? How safe are the banks? What if Mexico and Argentina default on their loans? What's that going to do to the whole banking community? Is it going to bring it down like a row of dominoes? Oh, but it's guaranteed by an agency of the federal government. Read the fine print. You know, the whole banking system goes down.

There's not enough in that agency to bail out American savings and loans. So, where can I put my money that it will really be safe? How safe are T-bills? How solvent is the government? Man, it's the greatest debtor of anything in the world, I guess. 300 billion dollars? Well, buy gold.

Buy silver. A lot of people bought gold and silver and they bought gold and silver for 900 dollars, you know, gold for 900 dollars an ounce. Now they can get 349 dollars an ounce.

But that's all an artificial value. I mean, what can you do with gold? Except to say, well, I've got so many cougar ants. It's all an artificial value.

Diamonds. Well, buy diamonds. Invest in diamonds, you know.

It's all artificial value. It's just a stone. Hey, when things get really bad, you can't eat it.

You know, and when things are really bad, that's what you think about. What am I going to eat? And the Bible tells us that there's coming a time when it'll take a bag of gold to buy a loaf of bread. So, when it really gets down to it and you need something to eat, you're going to have to get rid of that gold and who knows what value will be placed upon it at that time.

I mean, you know, I like a gold ring. That's not really gold. Watch gold plate.

Cheap. But as far as true value, where is true value? The true value is only in spiritual things. That's the only true value that we can really know.

In spiritual things, not in the earthly material things. That value is all artificial. It's like one fellow said, it's only worth what you can get for it.

Somebody says, well, I have a house that's worth \$500,000. Well, how much can you sell it for? Well, I've had it on the market, you know, for three years for \$350,000. It hasn't sold yet, but it's worth \$500,000.

No, it's not. It's only worth what you can get for it. Artificial values.

And those who have placed their whole thing into gold, those that have bought up gold and silver for these last days, how disappointed they're going to be. Weep and howl, James says, for the miseries that are coming upon you. Because you've tried to set yourself up for these last days.

You've tried to hedge against inflation by getting into gold or getting into silver. But now they're worthless. Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped your fields, which you kept back from them through fraud.

They cry and the cries of them which have reaped are entered to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You've lived in pleasure on the earth. You've been wanton.

You've nourished your hearts as in the day of slaughter. You've condemned and killed the just one and He did not resist you. So, James speaks out against the oppression of the poor, the oppression of the labor by management.

Cries for inequity. Verse 7, he changes and now he is exhorting us to be patient to the coming of the Lord. For behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it until he receives the early and the latter rain.

Be ye also patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh. Now, it is interesting to me that so many places in the Scripture we are exhorted towards patience as far as the return of Jesus Christ is concerned.

Peter exhorts towards patience for much the same reason that the long suffering of God is the salvation of lost. Here, exhortation to patience because the Lord is waiting for the precious fruit of harvest. If the Lord had come ten years ago, where would a lot of you have been tonight? Five years ago, where would a lot of you have been, you see? So, the Lord is waiting for the latter rain, that is the final harvest of souls.

And I do believe that we are beginning to see a tremendous harvest of souls throughout the world that I do believe is the foreshadowing the return of Jesus Christ. I think that the Lord is giving the final opportunity to man. We've come just about to the end of the rope and God has thrown out for the final time the opportunity of people to get right with God and I think that it will soon be over.

But have patience. Establish your hearts. The Lord, the husbandman, is waiting for the precious fruit of harvest.

Grudge not against another, brethren, unless you be condemned because the judge is standing at the door. Take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering, affliction and of patience. So, look what they endured.

The prophets. Look what Jeremiah endured. Look what Isaiah endured and others of the prophets.

Elijah, Elisha. The things that they suffered because of their stand for God. They're an example for us of suffering, affliction and of patience.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. You've heard of the patience of Job and you've seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very full of pity and He's of tender mercy. God's full of pity.

In Psalm 103, the Lord is full of pity for He knows our frame that we are but dust. God, when He looks at you, doesn't expect to see a superman or a super saint. He says, well, they're just dust anyhow.

That's why He's so merciful because He knows your frame. That's why we're not so merciful many times on ourselves because we think that we're more than dust. We think that we're a rock.

I'm strong. I'm able. I can do it.

And then we get fractured and we get discouraged and disappointed and we think that God is all upset with us. No, no, no. He's not upset.

He's merciful. He knew all the time we were but dust. It was you that made the mistake.

You that overestimated your capacities and abilities, not God. You didn't disappoint Him. He knew all the time.

It was important that you know what He knows. And so He lets you fall in your face. The Lord is full of pity and tender mercy.

But above all things, my brothers, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yes be yes, let your no be no, lest you fall into condemnation. Now, a man oftentimes, if he is a liar, is constantly swearing that he's telling the truth. And that's why I'm often suspicious of the person who is constantly affirming, oh, this is God's honest truth, man, you know.

I become very suspicious when they are constantly affirming that what they tell you is true. If it's true, you don't need to constantly affirm it. And James is actually saying, don't swear.

I'll do it. I'll do it. I promise I'll do it, you know.

Swear by heaven I'll be there. No, no, no, no. Just let your yes be a yes and let your no be a no.

Jesus said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. Be a man or a person of your word. If you say yes, mean yes.

If you say no, mean no. And don't be the kind of a person that you have to swear to cause someone to believe that you're telling the truth. Now, is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.

Are you happy? Sing psalms. Is there any sick among you? Then let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up.

Now, it is interesting a distinction is made here between afflictions and sickness. And I don't know that we can always discern the difference between is this an affliction or is this a sickness. But it would seem that afflictions are used by God for the purposes of correction.

That when afflictions come, then I need to pray. I need to find out from God what He's trying to teach me, what He's trying to tell me. You see, our problem is that we are not often sensitive to the things of the Spirit.

There seems to be a spiritual dullness that is quite prevalent among the church. It's like Romaine said, you've got to beat you over the head with a 2x4 to get your attention before I can talk to you. And if God's beating you over the head with a 2x4, you're afflicted, then you better pray and find out what God's trying to say.

And so, if you're afflicted, it said let him pray. That is, God is probably trying to get your attention in some area of your life and He sometimes has to use rather harsh or painful means. In Psalm 32, as the Lord speaks to the psalmist, He said, look, I want to guide you with my eye.

Don't be like a mule who you have to put a bit in its mouth to lead it around. Now the bit is very painful and the reason why the mule will turn when you pull on the rein is because it pulls the bit up against his mouth. It hurts.

So he'll turn his head because it hurts. Now God is saying to you, don't be so stubborn like a mule that I have to use painful processes to get you to turn. I would guide you with my eye.

I want you to be sensitive to my will and my plan and I'll be glad to just guide you with my eye. God doesn't want to guide us with painful processes, but He loves us so much that He will because it is that important that I be guided by the Spirit of God and He knows it's for my best welfare that I walk in this path and if I start to go astray and if I won't listen, He'll use the bit or the bridle. He'll pull me back into position.

Maybe a painful experience. Oh Lord, what's happening? Well, off track. I wasn't listening.

I was headstrong. I was going to do it. Paul the Apostle.

The Lord used the bit and bridle with Paul because he was so headstrong and so many times. But if you're afflicted, pray. If you're merry, sing psalms.

Rejoice. If you're sick, then call for the elders of the church. The elders of the church meet here on Saturday nights to pray for the sick.

The prayer of faith will save the sick. The Lord shall raise them up. And if they have committed sins, they shall be forgiven.

It's interesting that there seems to be a correlation here between sickness and sin. At least in the deliverance of sickness and in the forgiveness of sins. And it is interesting how many sicknesses can be related to sin in a very direct way.

But yet, on the other hand, let me say that I think that it is a very dangerous error to try to relate all sickness to sin. And you're then putting yourself in the position of a judge and you're judging wrongly many times. Well, you know, they've got it coming to them.

And I think that that's cruel and dangerous to say that all sickness is the result of sin in a person's life. Not at all. Now, confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you might be healed.

That is of your faults. I think that... Notice it doesn't say confess your sins. It's confessing your faults one to another.

We confess our sins to God. He's faithful and just to forgive us. But I may have a weakness in my life.

And, of course, I'm very often confessing my faults to you. Not for you to just laugh at me, which you often do when I tell you my problem's on the freeways. Hey, but freeway's coming along and improving.

On the way to church this morning, two cars pulled out in front of me. And I counted it all joy. I passed the test today, but that doesn't guarantee tomorrow.

But pray for me. Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another. We, each of us, have our faults, our failures.

Those areas in our lives where we need to yield more to the Spirit of God and find His strength and find His help. And it's good to have a prayer partner that you can just open up to and say, hey, I'm having a problem in this particular area. Pray for me, will you? Confess your faults one to another.

Pray one for another that you may be healed. For the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Our son-in-law was getting after our little three-year-old granddaughter because her prayers seemed to be developing sort of a rote.

And he said, now, Kristen, when you pray, you should pray not just quick little prayers and the same prayer every time, but really start praying from your heart and really mean your prayers. Think about them and really mean your prayers when you talk to God. Because she was usually just praying, God bless our food, strengthen our body, in Jesus' name, Amen.

And then start eating. So, dinner time came and they called on her to pray and she said, Lord, bless our food. I mean really bless our food, Lord.

The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And this is the thing that I always get a charge out of. Elijah was a man subject to the same things that we are.

He was just like you. A man of like passions, just like us. We usually read of these people in the Bible, Elijah, Elisha, and Joshua, and Moses, and Paul, and Peter.

We usually think of them in a category that's sort of up here and I'm down here. And we sort of think of the things that they did as completely unattainable by the common ordinary person. But Elijah was a man of like passions, just like you.

No different from you. And yet, he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for the space of three years and six months. Now can you imagine that? A man just like you praying earnestly and saying, God don't let it rain.

Let these people learn through a drought to call upon your name and all, and cut off the rain. A man of like passions, just like you. And yet he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Here was a man controlling the weather with his prayers. A man just like you. That amazes me.

We had a, years ago, when a lot of hippies were around here, we had a, the hippies are still here, but they've disguised themselves now. They shave. But we had a summer camp up at Idyllwild.

In fact, I think there's still a picture in the office of the summer camp that we had up there. And this one afternoon, at dinner time, it started pouring rain. Just pouring down.

And we had a tin roof, and it seemed to magnify even the intensity of the rain. But you know how the mountain summer rains are. The thunderhead, I mean, just really pouring.

So at dinner time, in the announcements, I announced that we would have the outside victory circle meeting. And the kids said, we can't have it, it's pouring rain. I said, no, I've asked the Lord to stop the rain at six o'clock so that we can have our victory circle.

So we're going to have victory circle at six o'clock outside. Five minutes to six, the rain stopped. We had victory circle.

At five minutes to seven, I said, okay, you better get into the fellowship hall pretty quick because I asked the Lord to hold off the rain until the evening service. So we got into the evening service, and five minutes after seven, it started pouring again. And they said, oh, you said seven o'clock.

You told the Lord it's five after seven. I said, well, He knew better than I did that you needed more time to get into this place. All during the service, it poured rain.

And so I said after the service, okay, you can go up to the snack bar for a half hour, but be in your cabins by 1030. It quit raining. They went up, had their snacks, and those that didn't get in by 1030 got soaked.

It started raining again. Hey, I'll tell you, after that, those kids sort of left a distance between themselves and me for a while, you know. But if Elijah was a man of like passion and he prayed and it rained and he prayed again and he prayed it rained not and prayed again and it rained.

You know, we so many times are guilty, I think, as the children of Israel, of limiting that which God would do just by our unbelief. Now, if any of you err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins. Now, if one errs from the way and you convert him, you don't convert him by confirming him that everything is all right.

Oh, go ahead. God is merciful. God is gracious.

Doesn't really matter. But you convert him by bringing him away from that sin, not giving him assurance in his sin. I don't think that we should ever assure anybody in sin.

I don't know that the Bible assures anybody who is in sin. It assures those who are in Christ. And all of the Scriptures that speak of assurance are to those that are in Christ.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ. But if you're not in Christ, there is condemnation. So, if a person errs, seek to turn them back to the walk of faith in Christ.

For you will save their soul from death and you will hide a multitude of sins. Next week we get into Peter's epistles which are fascinating and rich. And so we'll do the first two chapters of 1 Peter next Sunday evening.

And now Father, even as James has exhorted us, help us that we might be doers of the Word and not hearers only. And as we have heard these exhortations from Your Word tonight, and as we were listening, Your Holy Spirit spoke to our heart about different areas. To some of us about our tongues.

To others about envying and strife. To others about the lust. To others about the friendship with the world and the desire for worldly things.

Lord, even as Your Spirit has spoken to our hearts tonight, let us give heed to the Word and be doers of the Word. Help us, Lord, that we might indeed love one another, pray one for another, encourage and strengthen one another. Use our tongues to bless and to strengthen each other and to encourage each other that we might indeed be the children of God and bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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