

# A Working Faith - Arrogant Presumption Exposed

by J. Glyn Owen

---

*James warns against arrogant presumption and self-righteousness in the Christian life, emphasizing the importance of humility and a correct understanding of one's place in the body of Christ.*

**Duration:** 55:56

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:1-2, Matthew 7:24, James 4:11-17

**Topics:** "Presumption"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on James chapter 4, specifically verses 11 to 17. He emphasizes the ongoing battle against sin in the Christian life and warns against self-righteous arrogance and judgment of fellow believers. The preacher also addresses the issue of planning our lives and business without considering God's sovereignty. He highlights the importance of avoiding arrogant presumption in our relationships within the Christian community.

---

## Transcript

Continuing our studies in the letter written by James, the brother of our Lord, we come now to chapter 4 and the passage that begins with verse 11. I would like you kindly to turn to the passage in the Bibles before you, and I'm sure you will find profit as you make sure that the person who is in the pulpit is not going astray or attempting to lead you astray. Keep your eyes on the book.

James has made it crystal clear already in this fourth chapter that the ongoing battle of the Christian life against sin and its ramifications in one's life and experience is considerable and unremitting. It is a battle that we dare not abandon for a solitary day, indeed for an hour. It is an ongoing, a constant affair.

The believer, according to this particular chapter, must strike at the very root of his most natural desires. They must not be allowed to reign because wars, word battles, divisions, and strife all emanate, says James, in chapter 4, verses 1 to 3. All the battles and the quarrels that crop up among the Lord's people come from within ourselves, not fundamentally from the circumstances in which we find ourselves or from what other people do, but basically, fundamentally, from within our own nature. Now, we may have a quarrel with what James is saying, but this is what he's saying under inspiration, and I'm quite sure that he has said it for our profits as well as for the learning of other generations.

The Christian also must avoid such friendship with the world as would automatically imply that he is an enemy of God. Oh, the Christian is to love the world in one sense. Ruth Thompson is going to Brazil not because she hates the world, neither because she loves the world, but because she loves men and women whom God in Christ would bring into his kingdom.

And she loves the God who has commissioned her. There is a sense in which our love for the world or our friendship with the world means that we are at loggerheads with God. If we are more content to please the world around us than we are to please the God above us, then we prove that we are on better terms with the world than we are with God.

That is, our friendship with the world means that we are at enmity with God. And we've got to see that this is not so. It's a very hectic battle.

It's a battle in which we need to be diligent all day long and unremittingly wherever we are. And not only that, the Christian must learn to submit to God from the vantage point of humility. We are to submit ourselves to God and not to try to put ourselves above God and to coerce him.

We can't, of course, but we are not to attempt to coerce God to come our way and to do our thing for us and to obey us and to be our little servant. As the creatures of God and as the redeemed of Christ, we are to submit ourselves to God and to take the humble position before us. And in due season, if we do that, he will lift us up and he will honor us and he will use us to fulfill his purpose.

The battle is unremitting, but even when James has come that far, he has still much, much, much more to say and all so very practical that really it's difficult to take it. My problem with the book of James is not so much in understanding it. I'm not sure that I understand everything it says, but my most basic problem with the book of James is not understanding it, but it's obeying it.

And there are two passages that were brought together in the subject that we meant to take tonight. I put it that way because we shall only deal with half of it and we'll leave the other half for another time, not next Lord's Day, but nearer Christmas or perhaps nearer the end of the year. There are two passages brought together here in which James deals with two major issues again and they're very much related.

He warns us in the verses, verses 11 to 17, he warns us against the self-righteous arrogance that presumes to malign and judge our brother, our brother Christian, and our brother Christian who is seeking to do God's will and to obey God's law. And then against the self-opinionated brashness of the same basic nature that sometimes expresses itself in the simple matter of planning our lives and our business programs. We plan as if God were not God, but we are.

Did you know, my friends, the way you fill in your diary, the way you book your appointments can express a view of God that is unworthy. Now you chew that one over. And in chewing it over, read these last few verses of the book of chapter 4 of James.

There is a way in filling up your diary, which is a basic denial of the Godhood of God. There is an honorable way of doing it, but there is a dishonorable. And the dishonorable way of filling up our diary, planning our life for tomorrow and the day after, is one which puts God on one side and treats life as if we were the captains of our own fate, which we are not.

Now it's to the first of these two men issues, namely the issue that we have between verses 11, rather in verses 11 and 12, that we are going to look at tonight. And we must confine ourselves to this. Here, what

James is telling us is this.

Put quite prosaically, we must avoid arrogant presumption in our relation to the brotherhood of the Christian church. We must avoid arrogant presumption in our relations, the one with the other, as Christian men and women. Let me read verses 11 and 12 again.

I don't think we can read these verses too often. Brothers, and I'm reading again from the NIV, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against him or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.

When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one lawgiver and judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you, asks James, who are you to judge your neighbor? Now, I was almost going to apologize.

Apologize, I can't, because this is the word of God. But I must warn you, unless you are going to sleep tonight, you are going to find that this word is a way of getting under the skin. Because this is a word that rarely comes very close to us and asks us some serious questions about our attitude toward other people, and especially about other Christians.

Now, the presumption envisaged here is brought out very clearly in the opening words of verse 11. Brothers, says James, do not slander one another. He's talking to the brethren.

He's talking to Christians. He's talking to brothers, all right? He's not talking to outright pagans in the world who've never been humbled by the grace of God, who've never seen themselves as sinners, lost and undone and cried for mercy. He's not talking to them.

He's addressing the saints of God. He's addressing the brethren, the brotherhood, the Christian brotherhood. And I trust that I'm addressing the brotherhood tonight.

There could well be someone among us who as yet is uncommitted to the Lord Jesus Christ and does not acknowledge him as Savior. I trust, if so, that tonight may be the night of acknowledgement. But I'm quite sure that basically, generally speaking, I am addressing tonight the brotherhood, the Christian church, the Christian community.

And this is a word to you and to me, to us. The RSV translates it, do not speak evil against one another, brethren. James is still thinking, I believe, in measure of the wars and the battles and heated words which can mar a Christian's fellowship and testimony to which he referred a way back in verses one and two of chapter four.

What causes fights and quarrels among you, he says. Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something, but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want.

You quarrel and fight and so on. And James is still thinking in some measure about that. And then he comes back to the Christian brotherhood and he says, brothers, brothers, brothers, don't slander one another.

When you're wanting things that you can't get, don't say evil things about one another. That's the temptation, to get your own way. To justify your own case.

To try and wring something out of the hand or out of the heart or out of the pocket of an unwilling brother. James may also be still thinking, of course, of the uncontrollable nature of the human tongue. He has

described that in the most glaring language.

Earlier on, you remember, in chapter three. Can I remind you of these words? It was Mr. McLeod who took us through this passage and I sat where he's sitting tonight. And I must say, I could hardly take it all in.

I thought I'd read this rather well before. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man. But no man can tame the tongue.

It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.

My brother, says James, this shouldn't be so. There is this basic contradiction in the hearts and lives of so many of us Christians. James says it shouldn't be so, but it is so.

And all that is unquestionably in his mind, in his memory and to some extent as he comes to these words before us tonight. Brothers, he says, don't slander one another. Don't speak evil of one another.

Be careful how you talk of one another within the brotherhood of the redeemed community. In verses 11 and 12 then of chapter 4, James thus strikes forth against the underlying arrogance and presumption which all too often explodes in a tirade of offensive words against our fellow Christians and even, even, even against those that are nearest and dearest to us. And it is all because we have not grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But if we are redeemed, we are God-bearers and carnal to a very large degree. Now, there is something very basic here that we need to understand. There is a judgment that is right and there is a judgment that is wrong.

A judgment of people and of things. Now, if we don't understand that, this, and if we don't recognize this in Scripture, we, we, we shall miss so much and we'll become floundered. I know people, for example, who very rarely have a negative word to say about anything, however bad it is, however corrupt it is, however despicable it is.

Everything's nice. Everything in the garden's lovely. You know, you can always say something nice about it.

Nice is the word, is the appropriate word. And you know why they talk like that? Because they have never seen that in the Scriptures there is a judgment that is necessary and proper and legitimate and there is a judgment that is absolutely condemned as the plague, as here in James. The entire New Testament, let me say in the first place, the entire New Testament with its emphasis upon separation from the world to God requires a value judgment.

If you want to separate from the world, you've got to choose what is worldly and what is of this world and what is not. You've got to judge. You've got to assess.

And you've got to decide this is wrong, this is right. The whole Christian calling to holiness of life and service of God requires that we judge things to be right or to be wrong, to be for God or against God, to be friendship with the world or to be enmity with God. The very passage in which our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, do not judge or you will be judged.

You remember, ends in verse 24 by telling us what? Now, I won't test you, but I know that many of you remember Matthew 7 and verse 1. Don't judge that you'll be not judged. And unfortunately, that's the only verse in Matthew chapter 7 that many people know and many people have heard or the only verse that has stuck. Don't judge that you'll be not judged for with what measure you judge, it shall be judged to you again.

You know how our Lord says in verse 24, he says, judge righteous judgment. And before he comes to verse 24, he makes it quite clear that we've got to judge. He says, don't throw that which is holy before the dogs.

Well, you've got to make an assessment. What is holy? Who are the dogs? So there is a judgment that is necessary for growing up in the Christian life. There is a kind of assessment that we must learn to make of things and of people and of circumstances.

We must be able to judge between right and wrong. But on the other hand, this is what James has got before us tonight. There is a kind of diabolically inspired censoriousness of others that is to be avoided like the plague.

It will ultimately dwarf your own spiritual life to a point of non-existence. And it will decimate the fellowship to which you belong and it will dishonor the God whose name you bear. There is a censoriousness of your brother Christian which is absolutely strangling in its effect upon the spiritual life.

It grieves the spirit of God and you might as well write over the church that is involved in this if a church is involved in this. Now, this evil kind of judging and speaking about people may well betray both the psychological sickness and the spiritual malice. I say that for this reason.

It may be basically... It may be... Underline maybe. It may be basically a matter of an outrageous superiority complex which needs to be dealt with by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. When a man has got the wrong view of himself or a woman has got the wrong view of herself and he or she has never seen herself to be hell deserving, condemned by God, a cast out, a rebel, without hope in the world apart from grace.

And there are such people in the church. They've never seen themselves as worms of Gehenna, sinners in the hand of an angry God who is just. And because of that, they're proud and arrogant and they go about strutting as if they've got the right to judge everybody and put everybody in place.

They've never seen the greatness and the glory of God. They've only seen the glory of their own selves in the mirror. And they're going around saying, aren't I a jolly good man and a great woman, a marvelous person? Listen to me.

Watch me. I'm king. I'm Lord.

God have mercy upon us. You know, the Greek verb used here, katalaline, brings out the nuance of a man who is talking down at his brother Christian. Now, that's all you need to say, really, to get the kick of it.

Now, I'm unfortunately talking down physically to you good people because you're sitting down in the pew and I'm up here in the pulpit. But I do trust I never give the impression that I'm talking down at you spiritually. But this verb implies that there is a person, you see, or there are persons that can come within the brotherhood and they presume to be higher than the rest and to be nobler than the rest and to be wiser

than the rest.

And when they say a word, period, you don't question. You just obey. And they have the right to say exactly what they want to say.

They're talking down. As if the person who assumes the right to judge his brother were on a higher spiritual plane and he has the right so to do. From that imaginary platform of self-exaltation, he or she presumes to have a God-given right to defame others.

I don't know whether I ought to say this, but you know, lady once said to me in all seriousness, now she wasn't joking, she was talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And in all seriousness, she said, now I don't know, she says, whether I have the gift of tongues. I've had some marvelous experiences and I'm not sure whether I've spoken in tongues.

And I'm not sure, she says, whether I have the gift of healing because I have prayed for people and they've been healed. But I know the gift that God has given me, she said. The gift that God has given me is the gift of judging people.

I said, let me hear that again. Now, you know, I'm very slow with the uptake. I'm very dull sometimes and I said, beg your pardon.

Yes, she says, my gift, the gift of the Spirit to me is the gift of judging people. She says, my judgment is infallible. Well, I said, my dear lady, I was only reading the other day in John chapter 5. There must be some mistakes on there.

I was only reading in John chapter 5 and verse 20 that God has committed all judgment into the hands of his Son. I said, when did he take it out from there? Now, in all seriousness, this good lady believed that she had the right to adjudicate on all issues that caused entanglements and worries and problems in the church. And in the lives of individuals, she thought that this was the gift of the Holy Spirit to her.

She had no more doubt about it than I have about the fact that I'm actually standing before you now. There then is the presumption envisaged, the presumption to have the right to speak down to our brothers and sisters in Christ as if we were above them and in and of ourselves have the right to judge them. And to mold their characters and to determine how their consciences act or react.

But now, fortunately, James goes forward and we have the prohibition explained and it's just as well he does. James helpfully explains himself. Otherwise, our view of his meaning might be seriously at fault.

And here we have in this passage, here we have a clearly defined pattern for this aspect of Christian living. If we really want to be obedient to the word of God, James gives four crucial reasons for his prohibition against our defaming and maliciously judging our fellow believers. We'll deal with them briefly tonight, necessarily so.

First of all, this attitude towards the brotherhood, towards Christian men and women, contravenes the bond of Christian brotherhood itself. Brothers do not slander one another, says James. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him, speaks against the law and judges the law.

Do not slander one another. Now, actually, there in the English and whatever translation you have, there are very few of the versions that bring out this fact, which is found in the Greek language. Three times

over, the word brother comes in.

It comes in twice, probably, in most of your translations. And there's a pronoun that makes use for the noun in other versions. But three times over, James uses the word brother.

It doesn't make good grammar, but it makes sense because this is the point he wants to get across, you see. He's addressing people as brothers. Brothers and sisters.

Brother includes sister here. It's a generic term. It is inconsistent with our whole faith and experience as Christians for anyone to assume the kind of alleged superiority over another that presumes the right to mold that other person's behavior, to muzzle that other person's conscience, and to render infallible judgment upon that other person's action.

You see, within the brotherhood, we all have the same Heavenly Father. We are children of the same Father. We are redeemed by the same blood.

We have the same Jesus Christ as our Lord. The Spirit of Christ indwells each member within the brotherhood. And as the chiefest of His gift to the church, the Holy Spirit has given His word, His sword, His word to the church to guide the whole church in the way that we should live.

Now, you see, it is quite incongruous for any individual, therefore, or any group of individuals within the church to assume that we have the right to boss other brothers and sisters around. We haven't got the right to do it. It would mar the very brotherhood, the very fellowship, the very koinonia that God the Father has brought into existence through the blood of His Son and the indwelling of His Spirit and the proclamation of His word.

When we mar the unity of the body of Christ, we run counter to everything that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost has done and desires to do and has planned. And if that is not a sin, then I'd like to know what is a sin. Consequently, you see, the Old Testament and the New Testament both denounce censoriousness of any kind.

Angered, backbiting, whether it be towards God or towards man. Now, have you noticed this? If you haven't, you please check when you're reading through the Old Testament and when you're reading through the New. You check up and see whether I'm right.

I'll just give you one or two illustrations tonight, just one of each. Think, for example, of that incident back in Numbers chapter 20 where the Israelites have been speaking against God. God has brought them out of Egypt that they should die in the wilderness.

You remember their complaint? And God sent among them fiery serpents. You know, God literally slew them through the serpents. They died unless they looked to the provision that He had also made available.

But it was as serious as that. They were backbiting. They were criticizing the Almighty God.

Now, God won't have that. It is inconsistent with our creatureliness and with our profession as His people to be doing that kind of thing. And if He does not judge us summarily today as He did in Old Testament days, that doesn't mean to say that He is any the more pleased with this kind of behavior.

And sooner or later, we shall have to answer for it. But you see, the same kind of thing happened also in Numbers chapter 12 when people, when, for example, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses for

marrying a Cushite woman. Now, I don't want to go into the family affair and why these two didn't want Moses to marry a Cushite woman.

I don't want to go into all that argument and the reasons for and against. But the fact of the matter is this. They were angry with him.

Do you remember what happened? God was angry with them. They have no right over Moses. Moses is the Lord's servant and the servant is answerable to his Lord and not to his brother and his sister.

And whilst he's doing what is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, his brother and his sister, according to the flesh, ought to keep their mouths closed. Be careful what you say, how we judge one another. And Paul tells the Philippians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

He goes on to explain a little of what that means. Well, he goes, he explains quite a lot of what it means, but among the lot that he explains later on are these words. Do everything, he says, without complaining or arguing.

But did he really mean that? Is this important, you think? Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you yourselves shine like stars in the universe. You are the stars in the universe. The world around is black and dark.

How are you shining? You're doing everything without complaining and arguing, nor bickering with one another, nor finding fault with one another. One commentator says how slander was denounced among the pious Jews of ancient times and was called, quote, the third tongue. Let me repeat it in case you think I said it wrongly.

The third tongue. Now you may ask the question, why was it called the third tongue? And here is the answer. Because it slew three persons at once.

Slandered slaves, three persons at once. The speaker, the spoken to, and the spoken of. Even though the content of our criticism may sometimes be true, though generally exaggerated, if not false.

But it may sometimes be true we are still not in a position to exercise the kind of censorious judgment of our brothers and sisters that James so clearly condemns in this passage. Paul says if you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch, he says, watch out, or you will be destroyed by one another. Galatians 5.15. There is a way for your spiritual life as an individual to be destroyed because you keep on biting and other people bite you back.

The same goes for the Christian congregation. We can be a congregation of biters and back biters. Scripture has a far better method which Paul in his letter to the Galatians goes on to expound.

And let me just read to you two or three words, two or three verses. Brothers, he says, Galatians 6, beginning with the first verse. If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

Have you got the lovely picture? You who are spiritual should restore him gently. Not go in like a judge with all your robes on to cast judgment and to put him in prison and get rid of him. Go in to restore him with gentleness as the shepherd takes the lamb in his arms or the physician takes the babe into his hands.

But watch yourself at the same time, says Paul, or you also may be tempted. And then he puts it like this. Carry each other's burdens.

Carry the burden of the one that you're going to try to put right. Carry his burden. Understand his burden.

Understand his need. Get to know what's oppressing him and get under his burden. If you want to help him, if you want to put him right, you've got to get under his burden.

And when you're under his burden, then you can minister to him and help him to get back into fellowship. Don't stand up there looking down. Get under his burden.

And from that vantage point, you can help. If anyone thinks, says Paul, if anyone thinks he is something when he's nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions.

Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself with somebody else. For each one should carry his own load. Why then is it wrong to have this kind of censorious attitude towards a fellow Christian? Well, first of all, because it contravenes the bond of brotherhood.

I'll tell you in simple words it'll break the brotherhood. It'll break the kynonia, the fellowship. It may leave us as an aggregate of individuals that come to the same church, to the same building, and we sit in the same pew, but the cohesiveness, the ligaments that bind the body together, the heart that throbs within us and the spirit that should be uniting us, it's all gone, you see.

So that we're all just like units sitting in pews. But there's no bond. There is nothing which is more disastrous in the whole world tonight than people who call themselves individually Christian, but there's no bond between them.

Be careful how you deal with another Christian and what you say about him or about her, because it is inconsistent with the brotherhood and it will destroy the brotherhood to insult or to slander your brother or your sister. Secondly, it contradicts the law of God. Second part of verse 11.

When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. Now, malicious judgment of a fellow Christian, as if he were our inferior, and an attempt to sit in infallible judgment upon him in such a summary manner, not only contravenes the bonds of brotherhood, but contradicts the law of God our Father. God's law, as revealed in scripture and exemplified in his son, requires us to be careful how we deal with all God's creatures.

Every creature of God. This is something that has been brought home to me in a new way recently. I won't tell you how nor why, but it has been brought home to me very forcibly in recent days.

It doesn't matter what a man looks like. Doesn't matter what a person looks like or is dressed in. If that person is a creature of God, I owe him respect.

So do you. So do you. So do we all.

But having said that, God requires special respect for special classes. Oh, you say, I didn't know that. Well, you read your Bible.

God tells us to be very careful of our attitude towards the poor. Read your Old Testament as well as your New. He asks us to have special respect for widows and orphans.

And he will even bring his judgment upon nations because they don't deal right with their widows and their orphans. And he will even come to help a nation to be saved from the tyranny of a greater nation because it is kind to widows and to orphans. You read your Old Testament.

God especially requires us that we should honor his law in the way we behave towards one another. The Decalogue embodies this, that we should not steal, we should not lie, we should not covet and so forth. But it's written into the whole of the Old Testament, and I would go so far as to say it is written into the warp and woof of the New Testament.

God requires that we do, that we obey the principles of his law in this sense, that we should be very careful how we deal with other people, especially his own redeemed. To act censoriously and arrogantly in relation to these is to contravene his law. It is to break the law in smithereens and represents one of the most arrogant things that any man can ever do.

A comment comes up here, and I've got it before me. I thought I might read a few lines to you. It's from someone whose name would not be known to you.

Good Scotsman that he is, great man of God that he is, he's not as well known as he might be. But he's commenting on this passage, and he says something like this. It is God alone who makes the laws.

And for any member of that family to start legislating for the brother who displeases him is not only to find fault with him, but with a law which is not as hard with him as he would be. What the critic is really saying is this. Now, if I were God, if I were God, I would deal differently with that person.

It's such a pity, says this man of God, when we criticize one another that we do not go on to talk out all the implications of what we are saying. We would then be shocked to realize that we are setting ourselves up in the place of God. See how shocking this is.

We are really saying that I, a sinner, would be a better God than he whose law suffers leniently with this erring brother of ours. Yes, we would be a better God. That is to say, a harder God than God himself.

Except, of course, on ourselves. It would seem, therefore, that the chief difference between a sinner God and a sinless God is that the sinner God would exclude mercy, forgiveness, except, of course, for himself by special dispensation, from which we draw the conclusion that sinfulness is harder on sins than sinlessness. And, my friends, this is the heart of the matter.

Some of us can be harder on the sins of our fellow believers than God is. We can be more critical and we can be more arrogant and we can be more condemnatory and we can be more ruthless. Beware of sinful little gods.

I mean gods in their own eyes. How surprising is the Christian religion? The comment ends in this way. How surprising is the Christian religion? So reacting and rebounding, indeed, that we had better leave it as it is and let God and his law be the law and learn to bear with our brother as God does with him.

Besides, he has not only the superior knowledge, he also has the power and in due course he will act as is best in his sight and as is perfect. Now our place is not to judge God's law but to do it, says James. And in doing what the law requires, we shall not scandalize our brethren or our sisters for that would be a contradiction of the law itself.

Let's take this to heart. Hurriedly, let me mention the other two things. Why should we not be contradicting one another and scandalizing one another? It contravenes the bond of Christian brotherhood.

It contradicts the very law of God. Not only does it contradict the law of God but it condemns the law of God. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.

When you judge the law, you are not keeping it but you're sitting in judgment upon it. Now you see, he who criticizes his brother who is keeping the law and that is understood here all the time. The person who is being criticized is not the person who is breaking the law but he is a law keeper.

He's honestly doing what he believes the law requires of him, what the will of God is for him. But the allegedly superior Christian disagrees with him and because he disagrees with him, he speaks evil about him. He who criticizes his brother who is keeping the law is setting himself up as a superior to the very law itself as well as to his brethren.

He is virtually challenging the law by whatever innovation of thought or action he deems it requires and such arrogance is the very opposite of the humility that James has already demanded of the saints of God in verse 7. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil. He said, I will ascend to the throne of God and he would have you and myself do exactly the same.

He would puff us up with pride. Resist the devil, says James. Submit yourselves to God.

That is the way. Fourthly, the attitude against one's brother envisaged in this passage not only contravenes the spirit of Christian brotherhood, contradicts the law of God and condemns it, but finally it also reveals a basic confusion between the divine and the human prerogatives. God says through his servant James, there is only one lawgiver and only one judge, the one who is able to save and to destroy.

But you, says James, who are you to judge your neighbor? Now, it is basic, it is fundamental to our Christian faith to believe this, that there is only one lawgiver and there is only one judge. Isn't that so? If you and I were questioned about our faith tonight, we would have to say that there is one God and there is one lawgiver and the lawgiver is the judge. There is only one who is capable of legislating right and wrong for all men, namely God, our creator and judge.

Moreover, James would have us remember that as such, he has the power both to save and to destroy. He knows no rival to himself in this respect. There is only one God who is Lord.

And whenever you have one man or a group of men or people in a Christian community who assume the right to sit in total judgment upon other fellow believers, when they are apparently doing what they believe is right in the sight of God, those men have overstepped the limits and they're presuming to be God. This is very, very serious stuff. And it requires us to look into the mirror of God's word and before the final question of James in verse 12, I think we would all blush with shame.

You, he says, who are you to judge your neighbor? There is only one God, one lawgiver, one judge, only one, one only. Where did you come from? Your place and mine, dear brother and sister in Christ, your place and mine tonight is at the feet of the one God. It's at the behest of the one God.

It is like the Virgin Mary to say to him, behold your handmaiden, do what you want with me. I don't understand all about it, as we were seeing this morning, but if this is your way and if this is your will and if this is your plan, well, here I am, here's my body, here's my mind, here I am, here's my character.

Whatever people will say about me, whatever people will think, here I am.

As I sometimes hear men and women criticize others, criticize others who, out of their unquestioned loyalty to the word of God, stand for such things as respect for human life, for the marriage bond, its sanctity, who stand and plead for respect between the different sexes and for differences between the sexes to be acknowledged according to the plain word of God, I feel I would like to take them to this book of James and say, start reading, brother. Start reading, sister. There are differences of which God speaks in his word.

When you hear men standing for these differences and pleading for them, don't presume to be greater than God and judge those who are obeying the word of God and who live and preach and live according to these precepts. As we conclude, let us not think that this passage applies only to those who are absent from us tonight. That's always a failure with us Christians, isn't it? We can apply the word of God to those who are not with us.

But this word applies to me and it applies to you. I said at the beginning, this word is a penetrating one. We, too, are heirs to an inbred rebellion against God which sin has set a going within our human natures.

And we, too, would all too easily stand in judgment of all and sundry and not just say, I think that is wrong. Pardon me, but I think you're going the wrong way about it. But to sit in final judgment upon it, to condemn it outright without knowing all the facts and oftentimes on the basis of hearsay and to pass on what we've heard with a little bit embellishment so that we forget all about the value of character.

And if we ever come into confrontation with a person concerned, we try to bully people to do things when their consciences as yet have not been enlightened by the word of the Spirit of God. And we try to steamroller people to do what they doubt is right. God has great respect for men's consciences and he takes an awful lot of time in teaching some of us.

Have you noticed that? All the patience that God takes with me, all the patience of God with all of us. And he doesn't hang us over the pit every night because we haven't learned the lesson of the day. But he brings us on through life year after year in his infinite mercy and so many of the lessons we haven't learned and he gives us yet another chance and yet another chance and he forgives us and he cleanses us and he says, come back to me and I'll give you more grace.

And James assures us he does that. He gives more grace. That's God's way.

Oh, to be like our Father. Oh, to be a little more like the God whose name we bear, whose children we are. And that is the cry with which I close tonight.

Because our need, your need and mine is basically this. It is a need to grow up according to the likeness of our Heavenly Father. As that is revealed in the person of his co-equal son who became man among men and lived and died and rose again, the Christ of Nazareth.

May the Spirit of God create within us the capacity for the kind of assessments and judgments that we need to make in order to live the godly life. Whilst at the same time give us a wholesome hatred of this crippling, divisive censoriousness that stands in a kind of judgment upon others which is decimating to the fellowship and damning to the Lord our God. Your word forever is settled in heaven.

And we ask of you, O Lord, to forgive us. Yet we do not always recognize that. And the way in which we judge ourselves is so often less radical and realistic than the manner in which we would judge some of our nearest and dearest.

Men and women in the brotherhood of the redeemed. And we judge others far more harshly though we pretend that we live under the judgment of your unchanging word and truth. Forgive us.

Give us, we pray, O Lord, give us that true charity, that holy love of yours in our hearts that will enable us to love one another and when needs be that we should admonish one another in love and with the deepest affection as the shepherd would teach the straying lamb how to follow in his footmarks. Spirit of God, dwell richly in our hearts and lead us out into this new week in love with one another, respecting one another and all men in manifesting something of the dignity and of the beauty of the Lord. And of the glory of our heavenly Father to a world that is lost in the mists of the tortury and the trivial and the passing.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26586.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/a-working-faith-arrogant-presumption-exposed-2/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**