

The Taste of God Given Christ likeness

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking the glory of Christ above all else, highlighting the need to avoid comparison, seek God's wisdom with faith, guard the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and speak only what God has spoken with humility and without worldly chatter. The key is to have pure motives, ask in faith without doubting, and protect the anointing by avoiding pride and empty talk.

Scripture: James 4:10, James 1:5, 1 Timothy 6:20, James 4:3, James 4:7, 1 Corinthians 14:1, Proverbs 15:28, Proverbs 21:23, Proverbs 17:28

Topics: "Seeking God's Glory", "Guarding the Anointing"

Description

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Transcript

Yeah, hi family, happy new year to you all. I'm really looking forward to this year with you all and what the Lord will do in our midst. Just thinking about the memory verse we had for this last week.

Are we allowed to be anxious? No is correct and yes is also correct. We just said waiting anxiously. I hadn't thought about it until today.

I was like, okay, so I'm allowed to be anxious. Now that word has a different meaning from what you think of when you think of anxiousness or anxiety. But I thought about this even as I was listening to you all say the memory verse from last week.

If I'm going to be anxious about something or anytime you're tempted to be anxious, it's always about something of this earth. Like is there healing going to come? Is the money going to come? Is the situation going to be okay? It could be even a spiritual battle. But every time you're tempted to be anxious, turn that anxiety towards the coming of the Lord.

Let there be an eagerness. Waiting eagerly, I think some translations say. That's the real meaning there.

We're not fretting about Christ's return even though he delays, but we're eager. That's the thing that captivates our attention more than anything else. Let it be true this year for each of us individually, for our

marriages, for our homes, for our church, in every situation we face.

We're eagerly, eager. You know there are things that you eagerly wait for on this earth. Maybe it's a birthday, children.

I can't wait for my birthday. You count down the days to your birthday. Think about even though we don't know the day or the hour when Christ will return, we know he's coming soon.

We can't count down in terms of from down to zero, but we know it's soon. I want to be ready. Perhaps today the Lord will call me home.

Perhaps this week sometime the Lord will call me home. Will that sadden your heart? Is there something on this earth, a relationship or a thing that's holding you down? When the Lord says come, you're not able to be released right away. You're held down by something on this earth, some plan you made for this week.

So we're told in the scripture, make your plans but say if the Lord wills. The Lord doesn't call me home today, I'll see you guys. We'll have a meeting on Wednesday.

We'll have a prayer meeting on Saturday. I don't think we have a prayer meeting this week, but that's the way we go about our lives. I'd like you just quickly to turn to Jude 1, and in view of this, keeping ourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

He says first of all that there will be some who will bring division, verse 19, worldly minded, devoid of the Spirit. But then he also says in verse 22, in the verse after that, as you keep yourself in the love of God, waiting anxiously, have mercy on others. Be merciful.

God has given you light about his return and his mercy, and you are keeping yourself in the love of God. And you see somebody else who's not, have mercy on those who are doubting. Have mercy on some who are doubting.

Save others, snatching them out of the fire. And on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. So there will be those who you'll have to show mercy from a distance.

Pray for them like we heard last week. Intercede for them. But be careful of that garment polluted by the flesh.

Don't get sucked into their way of speaking or their sinful behavior or attitudes, their fleshly garments. But have mercy. And so I pray that this is a good verse for us to start this week also.

Psalms 16, I've set the Lord continually before me because he's there in my right hand. I will not be shaken. Say that verse to yourself often, dear brother, dear sister, your children.

I will not be shaken 2022. Maybe you'll look back on 2021 and you were shaken every now and then. Maybe.

But make it a goal. This is God's will. This is why we claim the promises of God.

If you can really say, I will not be shaken. It's not just a memory verse. It's a promise.

Because I've set the Lord before me continually, I will not be shaken. And if you wake up one morning and realize you were shaken the day before or the night before, you say, somehow I didn't set the Lord continually before me. So I'm going to do that again.

And I believe I will not be shaken. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 4. And I'd like to continue where I left off three or four weeks ago, I think now, where I was talking about how the life of Christ is received. It's not produced.

This is something I've been meditating on for a number of weeks, but actually for a number of months, I would say, because I find it so easy for us to try to produce the life of Christ. It's our tendency. And no matter how much we hear about it and are reminded about it, there's a tendency to slip back into, okay, I'm going to try harder this time.

I'm going to try to produce the life of Christ. The life of Christ cannot be produced. It is simply received.

But I started by talking about how God can only give the things of heaven to those who are nobodies. Those who have low thoughts about themselves and actually no thoughts about themselves. Lowly, lowly, like we sang even in one of those hymns, lowly.

In every situation when a thought tries to exalt itself, a thought about yourself, a thought about you and your idea, your agenda, tries to lift up itself. Choose the way of loneliness, the way of being a nobody. In every situation, be a nobody.

Don't seek to be a somebody. Even in the church, let God determine the circle that He draws around you and in that circle, be a nobody. If He calls you to preach, be a nobody.

If He calls you to clean the toilet, be a nobody. If He calls you to fill the water jug, be a nobody. If He calls you to give a ride to somebody, be a nobody.

If He calls you to help somebody move something, be a nobody. If He calls you to give a gift to somebody, be a nobody. If He calls you to be hospitable, do be a nobody.

Then God can use you. And that's what Paul was saying here in 1st Corinthians chapter 4 and 3 and 4 where in the church in Corinth because they were carnal. Carnal means they were fleshly in their thinking.

It's possible for Christians to be carnal. That means they're born again. They are you know he he says that they have laid their foundation on Christ in chapter 3 but their carnality is their fleshliness.

They still have an earthly way of thinking and as a result there are divisions in this church and there are people who say well I'm of Paul I'm of Apollos and another one says I'm of Christ so I'm even more spiritual than all of you and it's just division and it's even saying I'm of Christ in an earthly way in a divisive way in a way that looks down on others and Paul says what is Paul what is Apollos? They're nothing. We saw that last week and I want to continue where he says so verse 5 1st Corinthians 4 verse 5 do not go on passing judgment before the time. Anytime you're tempted to judge somebody else over anything about anything even if they disagree with you on some doctrinal matter let's say don't go on passing judgment.

You follow the Lord according to the light he's given you. You follow him wholeheartedly. Let Jesus be everything to you and don't judge anybody else.

That's what he's saying here don't go on passing judgment before the time and then he says in verse 8 you are already filled you have already become rich and Paul is comparing himself to the church that he planted. He says I planted, Apollos watered, God caused the growth and he says you who are the fruit of my labor you have become kings but I'm a servant Paul says and there's a testimony I ask you a question who are you following? Are you following the Corinthians who are a good church in some ways planted by Paul or are you following Paul? Do you want to be a king like the Corinthians were or do you want to be a servant? See I remember hearing this analogy that my dad shared once in a message and I've never forgotten it. Imagine if you were serving a king and the king said I want breakfast ready at 8 o'clock.

What time should you be ready as a servant? 7.30 maybe in case he shows up early. Let's say you're ready at 7 or 7.30 everything's neatly laid out and you're standing there at attention. This is the king and he walks in at 9 o'clock because he overslept.

What would you say? Would you be upset? You made me wait a whole hour for you. If he's the king you have no right. You're just there you had it ready before you just make sure it's not late.

The king can be late. The king can come at his convenience and Paul had this mentality and I'm not talking about timeliness specifically but just the attitude of a king versus the attitude of a servant. That's makes all the difference between those who build up the church those who have a desire to be a servant to be a nobody.

I'm here to think of others as more important than myself. These are the ones who are useful in the body of Christ. Not thinking of myself and oh they didn't treat me a particular way or they didn't invite me for this or they didn't say that to me or nobody talked to me.

These are kings who think like that. Servants are not there to be served. They're there to serve others and the best church is the one where it has the most number of servants or the highest percentage of servants I would say.

Most of the world thinks of churches in terms of how big they are. Whether it's the building or how many seats are filled. That's not what God is interested in.

How many people in a local expression in the local gathering have the spirit of a servant? That means they're the church the needs of the church not because it's RLCF or anything like that but because it's an expression of the body of Christ and I don't want to be exalted. I want Christ alone to be exalted and because I want Christ to be exalted it doesn't care it doesn't matter to me what my calling in life on this earth is in this body. If God calls me to be a nobody or he calls me to be a somebody in the world's view I'm still a nobody.

I'm a servant. Seek to be a servant. He says you are filled you have become rich you have become kings without us but we are servants.

He says in verse 9 you know a lot of people use the word Apostle as our title. Follow Paul's example as an Apostle who saw the Apostle as one who was condemned to death last. Look at verse 9. I love this expression of being an Apostle.

Some people say that the ministry of the gift of Apostles has seized. I don't believe it has because none of the other gifts where he says in Ephesians 4 Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers none of the others has seized and he's talking about Christ having ascended on high and then given to the church.

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists but don't if you desire to be an Apostle desire it this way.

Desire to be last. I think God has exhibited us Apostles last and the ones whom God can truly use to be Apostles in his body whatever that function looks like are the ones who are striving to be last more than anybody else. Such a person can actually be an Apostle.

Every situation they want to be last. They want to be last. You go ahead.

You go ahead not just in standing in line to eat because that can be something that you gain honor for. You know everybody looks at the person go last and says what what a what a self sacrificial person. No not in that in your own thinking when nobody knows that you think of yourself last.

Whether you stand in the front of the line or not are you at the back of the line in your mind then you're the last. God can use you. Last of all as men condemned to death because we have become a spectacle to the world.

Somebody that they make fun of. Do you desire this? I want to be somebody the world makes fun of. They think of what good is he.

Look at him. These are the ones that God chooses to be the most effective. So don't think of the word Apostle as you know aspire for that as a gift.

Aspire to be the last. Aspire to be a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. Fools for Christ.

Let everybody else be thought of as wise. You be thought of as a fool. Oh Santosh.

He's a fool. He's a little too radical. A little too crazy.

I want to be known by that. Not because I'm I desire to be made fun of but because I'm following Christ who was a fool hanging there on the cross and when everybody said prove that you're the Son of God by coming down. He says I'll be a fool.

I'll stay here. Then he says in verse yeah we'll continue reading verse 9. We have verse 10. We're fools for Christ.

You are prudent in Christ. We are weak. You are strong.

You want to be the weakest person in this church in terms of earthly gifts. Oh what good is that person? He has no gift. Can't do this.

Can't do that other thing. God says I can use you like Paul. You know Paul was an amazingly gifted man.

He'd studied in the top seminary in Israel at that time under the school of Gamaliel. But after he was born again he counted all of those things as loss. He says in Philippians 3. All of that education.

All of that ability. He didn't throw it away but he regarded it as useless. As manure dung for the sake of Christ.

And that's why God was even able to use the gift that he gave him. Paul's amazingly sharp mind God used to write more scripture than any of the other Apostles. And so God in a sense could use all of that training in Gamaliel and then take him for three years to the Arabian Desert so that he would spend three years

counting all of that knowledge as useless, good for nothing, worthless, dung.

And then he says okay I'm not gonna take away your mind but I'm gonna call you now to serve me. And you look at that gift as nothing. You are a nothing.

You are distinguished. We are without honor. Think about this.

The person who planted the church says you who are planted are distinguished. I who did the planting I'm without honor. I tell you my honest prayer.

I don't know as God is my judge but this is the desire of my heart even as an elder in this church that I would be the one without honor. I don't seek. I don't want to seek honor on this earth.

Let the other pastors and churches in the world desire that to be the first and have their picture on the website. We don't need that. I want to be the one without honor.

I want to follow Paul. I want who's following Christ. And if we can all go that way.

Thank you. We can all go that way. What a wonderful blessing it would be.

Even as a father in the home. Even as a mother in the home to be the one without honor. Keep reading.

To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty. Can you imagine Paul came to the church meeting in Corinth and they forgot to feed him. This is how lightly and lowly they thought of Paul.

He was the one that planted the church and they forgot about him because he had such a lowly way of going about them in their midst. I imagine Paul when he came to the meeting he played with the children. He was like the little children.

He played with them and everybody else had their intellectual conversations and there was Paul and they forgot to feed him. Like you would forget a child maybe that's a child. Did you you know if you forget to talk to a child you go back and think I didn't talk to that one child.

I wish I could talk to them. This was Paul taking the place of loneliness. We to this day we are both hungry and thirsty and poorly clothed.

Paul came in with the worst looking clothes on. Now it doesn't mean that we follow that example physically. That would be a dead work.

You wear the clothes God has given you but you don't pride yourself in it. You have the home God has given you. You have the job God has given you but you don't esteem those things as highly.

You don't think of others yourself as better than others because of something God has given you. That's what he's been saying. What do you have that you haven't received? Everything you have has been given.

We are roughly treated homeless. Paul was homeless. Not in the way that we think of as homelessness today but he was he didn't count of anything as a home.

He didn't wasn't attached to anything on this home. It says in the last chapter of Acts that he lived in his own rented apartment. So clearly he had a home but it wasn't as his home in his affections.

We toil working with our own hands. That's why we followed Paul's example in all of us elders in this church. Those who serve.

Nobody's supported by the church. When we are reviled we bless. When they want to speak evil about this church I pray I hope you will be one that says yeah let them speak evil of me.

It's okay. When we are reviled we bless. When we are persecuted we endure.

When we are slandered we try to reconcile. We have become as the scum of the world the dregs of all things even until now. You know the dregs of all things are when you make a cup of coffee and some dregs remain on that.

What do you do with that? You still think I want to eat the dregs. The leftovers a little bit of ground coffee didn't get filtered properly. It got left over in the cup.

What do you do? You just toss it into the trash. That's Paul. That's how he thought about himself and that's why he was the most effective man after Jesus Christ.

I believe in the history of mankind. Do you want to be effective dear brother, dear sister, husbands, wives, children? The world will tell you to pursue the big examples of those who become rich and famous. I pray that it'll be true about every single person that's come through RLCF or considers themselves a part of RLCF that we're seeking to be the dregs.

Let RLCF be the church that everybody says oh there's this church and that church and another thing and they forget to mention even us. We're not seeking to be known in this town or this state or in the country or anything like that. Let God be the one who allows us to have an influence and we must have an influence but we don't seek a reputation.

We're the dregs. We think of ourselves as the dregs and then God can use us. So this is the verse I wanted you to see though.

Verse 7. Who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? First Corinthians 4 verse 7. A very important verse for us to remember through this year. Everything you have received is given by God and anything that's of value, if you think you've gotten it in your own strength it's not going to be a value. Whatever you have you have received.

Whatever you have you received and I think of it like this that there are two types of Christians in the world. Those who are trying to produce the life of Christ like I was saying earlier. Let's turn to Genesis chapter 4. There are two types of Christians in this world and they're represented I think by these two men that you see in Genesis chapter 4. Those who are trying to produce the life of Christ saying I'm gonna do it better.

I'll be a better husband. I'll be a better wife. I'm gonna try harder and I'm gonna by hook or by crook I'm gonna be a better Christian this year.

That's my New Year's resolution and they fail and the second group of Christians are those who are receiving the life of Christ. Simply receiving it and they recognize that I did nothing to deserve this. I did nothing to to deserve that I am the husband that I am or the wife that I am or the husband or the father or the mother that I am or the brother or the employee or whatever.

I didn't work hard to be that person, the follower of Jesus that I am today. It was simply given to me. Those are the people who receive the life of Christ and you see that here as a picture in the difference between Cain and Seth.

Cain was the firstborn and the attitude that Eve had when she gave birth to Cain even in his name. Look at what it says in Genesis 4 verse 1. The man had relations with his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain and she said I have. I've done it and in a sense you could almost say that she said God you produced the first man Adam I produced the second man Cain just like you did.

See I'm like Christ too. See how I died in that situation and I denied myself. Jesus denied himself I did it too.

Look at my Christ likeness. This is the root of all religiosity. Cain represents religiosity.

He offered a sacrifice to God and was proud of it. It says God had no regard for Cain and that's why he rejected his sacrifice. He saw in Cain this spirit of look God I have given you an offering.

Aren't you happy with it? I brought it. By the toil by the sweat of my brow I produced this this fruit of the ground this wheat or this whatever produce from the ground he brought and he I imagine in Cain's thoughts there were oh I tilled the ground really well and then I watered it and I watched over it and I cared for it and then when these bugs came I pushed them away and look God I brought this tremendous harvest for you and I've laid it on the altar and there was nothing wrong with the fact that God that he brought grain. It was what God saw in Cain's heart that it was a producing of the sacrifice that God rejected and may it never be that we have an attitude of coming to God like I've produced this selfish unselfishness or this patience or this love or this forgiveness or this kindness or this mercy I showed somebody and I look back and say I was merciful in that situation and I sit with my shoulders up because I'm something or God uses you to be a blessing to somebody in the church or you share a word that is prophetic and it's an anointed word and it's an encouragement to others and you sit and think I said it and they quoted me this is the way it is in the world don't desire to be quoted don't desire to even say something be a nobody this was the root of religiosity Seth on the other hand after you know what the result of that was Cain killed his brother Abel quickly sin evil comes into the world and then after that Eve learns her lesson you read in verse 25 Adam had relations with his wife again and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth for she said God has given God has appointed now it's God now I'm not trying to give Eve more credit or give her more blame I just believe there's something represented here and you go on to read what it says God has appointed for me another offspring in place of Abel for Cain killed him to set to him also a son was born and he called his name Enosh and then it says this then men began to call the name of the Lord to call upon the name of the Lord or my margin says be called by the name of the Lord that's the literal meaning there though it's not we this church or that church or my religiosity my spiritual it is the name of the Lord whose are you what church are you where Jesus Christ that's it yeah we have a name so people can know where to find us but the name of the Lord that's what one that's what we want to be known by then men began to be called by the name of the Lord not by the name of Cain not even by the name of Abel it says that Jesus Christ has an offer to sacrifice his blood is greater even than the blood of Abel the blood of Abel was good to a certain extent but it cried out for revenge the blood of Jesus Christ speaks louder and we want to be known by the blood of Christ we want to be known by that name that when they come into our meetings and they see we exalt Jesus more than anything else it's not our programs it's not this or that it's not anything of an earthly value that we can offer to people but simply this they've they esteem Jesus when they come into our homes whether we play games or have

conversations or sing or have a meeting or or just eat a meal together these people are taken up with Jesus not ministry see there's a there's a there's a subtle difference there Cain was taken up with ministry that's religiosity I'm doing this for the Lord and I'm doing that other thing for the Lord and I have this meeting and I gave the gospel here or did this and do that what are you doing for the Lord I said some may say I'm just raising a godly home but I'm known by the name of the Lord and I want every one of my children to be known by the name of the Lord I want our marriage to be known by the name of the Lord seek for this this is true worship and the difference between religiosity and spirituality is this outwardly it looks the same I think in many ways you might go into one church and to another church one is religious the other spiritual and you may think well there's not much difference they kind of yeah the songs they sing similar songs they they speak similar messages but there's something different and you'll only know it by the taste there's a verse you know in Psalm 34 verse 8 have you seen that verse how do you know that the Lord is good you know when God is good he doesn't just say I'm good he doesn't just proclaim it from heaven he says Psalm 34 a man David writes God is so good that you can taste that he's good Psalm 34 verse 8 Oh taste and see that the Lord is good he doesn't just say believe me when I say the Lord is good or trust me take my word for it you who are hearing me David says you taste the Lord himself however you however that is now in the Old Testament it was only through his word that's why he could write Psalm 119 which is the longest chapter in the Bible and in that he talks about the the precepts of the Lord and the law of the Lord and he's precious and you can tell it's coming from a man who's not just set out as a goal to write the wrong longest chapter in the Bible I mean can you imagine the David said I want to write the longest chapter of the Bible so I'm gonna write Psalm 119 no that's not what he set out to do he said I've tasted the Lord he's so good and the extent to which he could know God was through his word at that time because Jesus had not yet come but he's so good that I want to keep writing and I want to keep writing I want to keep writing a hundred and seventy-six times he wrote a verse to talk about the goodness of the Lord and now he says come and taste and see the Lord is good he is good now our standard in the new covenant is much higher than David had we don't just read the Bible and say oh the Lord is good he says the word has become flesh and dwelt among us and we have touched him and tasted him is a sense that I get from John John got to physically touch Jesus but he was talking about something much more than that through the Holy Spirit this is why we must seek for the anointing of the Holy Spirit through the Holy Spirit the taste of Jesus becomes real to me he's not just something I preach about and know about and I know all the wonderful things he's done for me but the Holy Spirit has come within me and disclosed to me the things of Jesus and I have taken a bite off his life and I'm experiencing it this is the difference and I believe if you have discernment I desire that we will be a more discerning you can spend five minutes with somebody and taste of their Christianity and know whether it's real or not use an analogy I have here an apple you believe that it's an apple you should because it looks like one it's a very good apple and here's another one that's not an apple this is one they're different colors but this is supposed to be an apple and you might look at it from a distance and even touch it and these days they can make apples that are fake to feel realistic in fact as I touch this it feels quite real it's just a toy but I bet if I can imagine that if somebody wanted to imitate a real apple they could make it feel so good so soft and perfect like an apple until you take a bite into it and then you realize it's not a real life that's what the apple represents here real life cannot be duplicate cannot be created you can't create this with human strength of human ability only God can you can put a seed in the ground you can water it and you can take care of that apple tree but the production of apples like this takes life takes creation life in that see you can't create life man has been trying they've come up with realistic robots and been able to replicate and you know test tube babies all these things science is doing a lot of amazing things seemingly but there's one thing they will never be able to do and that's create life from scratch only God can do that and it's the same with the Christian life

it's the same with the life of Christ no matter how much I as a good man as a good disciple try to produce the life of Christ to me it's impossible it will it could look really good and the pharisees Jesus said do as they say but not as they do because they don't have it once you actually take a bite into it you realize it's not real and so think about it your brothers and sisters if people take a bite into your life spiritually what are they tasting is it real you can't fake it you can't say well I've got the right doctrines and I know I listen to this sermon and let me point you to that other sermon and I know what this means and what that other thing means but then they come and taste in your marriage and they taste in your home and they taste of your children and the way you're raising him and they taste about the goals that you've set and they realize man yeah the language is there but it doesn't taste good there's something missing doesn't taste like an apple and I have a longing with everything within me now there will be people who will be offended over the fact that we stand for the truth people may be offended by the by upholding the standards of Christ but in our spirit they must see a gentleness let your gentle spirit be known to all why because the Lord is near says in Philippians 4 let your gentleness be known and when they interact with you even though they see you like a lion at times when you preach the truth when they actually spend time with you realize you're a lamb this was Jesus chasing the money changers out of the temple but when you sat with him and you really had a hunger to be lowly and you were in need like Mary Magdalene found and the prostitutes and the tax gatherers found he was gentle with them that woman caught in adultery he was gentle with her he I imagine maybe he put his arm around and says I don't condemn you go and sin no more the lion and the lamb you know this is Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 13 that you are the salt of the earth and if salt has lost its savor what good are you what good is it you say I'm the salt you say we are new covenant you say we uphold this and we uphold that truth and we're seeking to follow Jesus but when you actually put when you're actually put into the food in the world there's no taste you don't just like the world you act just like the world the things that captivate your attention are just like the rest of the world so there's this tasteless white powder that's getting putting in the world and you say I'm salt and you put the two in and then don't taste I've never tasted salt that's lost its savor but apparently there's such a thing Jesus said it's possible sometimes you can tell that salt is not quite as salty certain brands of salt they cheapened it by mixing in something else maybe they put a little bit of stone in there too and so the overall effect no matter how much you grind it you put it's salt mixed with a little bit of stone as well fine stone sand white sand and then you put a bunch of that and you taste it and you realize man it didn't have any effect on the food Jesus warned us in Matthew 5 verse 13 you are the salt of the earth but a lot of people memorize you're the salt of the earth that's it you're the salt of the earth but what was Jesus point in saying that you are the salt of the earth make sure the taste is there if the salt has become tasteless how can it be made salty again remember that miracle that Jesus did which is another wonderful picture of the life of the new covenant life of Christ it says in Cana John chapter 2 you know Jesus put he had them put water and fill the water cups water jugs up and then he did a miracle in the water was immediately turned to wine and then he said go give it to the head waiter and it says when the head waiter tasted the water it doesn't say that he tasted the wine it says he tasted the water that means I think it looked like water that's my opinion you know it says it had become wine so I don't know I don't want to make a theological point on this maybe look right I don't know but it says he tasted the water which had become wine and he knew he tasted it and so whether the water whether the wine looks red or looks transparent is not the point and I believe there's a spiritual principle there that each of us may be called to look a little bit different our gifts may be different and you may think I look like water and that person looks like wine and no wonder everybody's drinking that we say Lord it's not about how I look it's not about the calling that you have for my life and what my family looks like or how many children I have or what I do for a living or this or that no this is what the world is taken up with this is what religious Christians are taken up with what things look like on the outside let them taste of

you if you have one child let them taste of how God has called you to raise that one child in the fear of God as opposed to whether he gives you more you know a lot of Christians even make a big deal about large families you know there is a blessing in large families but how many children you have or don't have is in the hands of the Lord let him decide how big your quiver is just make sure it's full that's all he says if God has planned for you to have a full quiver of three children make sure it's full that every single one of those three children is following the Lord and if your quiver consists of one arrow and it's full make sure it's full that that one child God gives you is following the Lord raised up in the fear of God so it's not about how it looks but that it tastes they taste like the goodness of God and so it's like this fruit you know remember what John said in the next chapter we read in John chapter 3 John the Baptist said this John chapter 3 we read in verse 27 here too you know the the disciples of John John was an amazingly godly man especially given the fact that he was under the old covenant did not have the Holy Spirit living within him like we do he had the Holy Spirit upon him and yet there was a tremendous nothingness about John he says in verse 30 I must decrease I must decrease he must increase John was seeking to go low and he recognized his calling my job is to push up Jesus and if God has called me to do it in a way that is less visible than somebody else that's great we're all called to push up Jesus that's it if God calls you to cause Jesus to increase in this church in a hidden way do it in a decreasing way God calls you to share something do it in a way that increases Jesus but having low thoughts about yourself John the Baptist got it and his disciples were the factional type faction means they had groups oh they're going you know they say hey John that person whom you who came after you people are going to him to get baptized instead of coming to you now you know you know why nobody's coming to your church anymore John the Baptist because they're going over there to meet with Jesus John wasn't jealous at this time at least he wasn't he wasn't saying oh wow how come you know this or that he says my job is just to exalt Jesus so he says in verse 27 a man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven he recognized that if the anointing of God and by the way I'm not talking about quantity I'm talking about the quality you see the anointing of God over somebody else in the church and a ministry that God gives somebody for a particular calling don't be jealous over it don't say oh I wish I could do that like he does say a man can receive nothing except it's given from above if God has given them that gift and given them that calling it's given from above I recognize it and God has given me something from above and I want to make sure that I'm living in that and that the circle that God has drawn around me is full whatever that circle is and in heaven we'll realize that there were many people who had such tremendous gifts but they weren't they did it they didn't do it in a way that was of being a nobody and somebody else I love to pick on housewives because they are you know sometimes you fill out these these forms when they ask the husband what do you do and you say this is what I do and they say wife what do you do homemaker is also there it's almost there as an afterthought oh homemaker okay you don't make any money right that's the way the world looks at homemakers and I believe they're going to be homemakers who are first in heaven I wouldn't be surprised if there are at the right hand of Jesus right in the left hand of Jesus two homemakers not because all of us may not be called to be homemakers I recognize that but they're ones who saw their calling in life and they were so taken up with that they don't want jealous about the other person who had that calling and the other person who has that other calling and for you sisters so much of the world is getting you to be taken up with being preachers and being this and being something great in the eyes of the world and you have such a tremendous calling to be a servant like Jesus was a servant like Jesus is a servant even today it says that when we get to heaven he will gird up his loins to serve us do you want to be at the right hand on the left hand of Jesus serving others even in heaven then you're ready let's follow him that way let's all seek to be homemakers irrespective of what our job title is let's seek to be winners of the bread of heaven whether we're bread winners in terms of this earth or not bread winners for heaven that's my job title so he

goes on to say verse 31 he who comes from above is above all he was off the earth is from the earth and speaks off the earth verse 34 for he whom God has sent speaks the words of God for he gives the spirit without measure we've heard this verse often he gives the spirit without measure but what is the context why does God give the spirit without measure so that Christ might be exalted don't skip to verse 34 where we're seeking for the anointing of the Holy Spirit without first going to verse 30 that says he must increase if it is the burden if it's the desire of your heart that Jesus Christ might increase in this church more and in your home more and in your marriage more and in your job place more then he will fill you with the Holy Spirit and I know that for years I missed the true anointing I got gifts I got tongues I got a lot of other things I got emotional stirring but I lacked the anointing of God over my life which made Jesus tasteful and made the Christ in me tasteful to others as well until I became a nobody I say Lord Jesus I have one ambition in life alone and that is to be pleasing to you that people may taste Christ in me not a little bit of Santos and some Christ no nothing of Santos Oh Santos tastes horrible he really does this death in him Christ is tasty and I want every bite that people taste of me and in my marriage in my home and in this church to be tasty that's why I want to decrease more that Christ might increase and so in order for us to receive let's continue I'll finish this chapter the father loves the son and has given all things into his hand he who believes in the son has the same thing that the father gave to the son and the son has given to him he says it clarifies it in John chapter 5 a few verses later the father has all things and he's given it into Jesus look at the position that Jesus took he didn't come here strong in his own strength or as God he emptied himself and says father I'm gonna live in such a way that whatever I have you must give me this is what John the Baptist was saying about Jesus what do you have Jesus nothing oh can you heal the sick yeah that's because the father gave me that ability can you cast out a demon yeah because the father gave that me I nothing of Jesus that's the mentality Jesus had the father the father the father the father the father and now he says as the father has sent me so send I you so that Christ would be exalted and I ask I say seek for the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus says so that Christ can be exalted he will testify of me he will exalt me does God give you a gift I don't think any of us has cast out demons or performed miracles I've heard preachers boast about miracles they did or this or that I can tell that they don't know God they don't really have the anointing of the Holy Spirit because when the anointing is there you want to speak less about yourself and what you've done and you want to exalt Jesus you want to lift him up in such a way that people are drawn to to know him not to know what miracles you've done and some other thing you've done they know Jesus they taste Jesus and you says wow I spent five minutes with him and all he could talk about was Jesus not what he did for Jesus and that's the man I want to follow that's why I follow Paul that's why I've said as an example for myself men and women who as I taste of their life whether I read about it in a biography or hear a message that they preached or know them in person I see that they have set Christ as everything for them and the more I taste of them and listen to their sermons the more I'm tasting Christ and less of them that's why we are careful about who we listen to as preachers because not everybody's preaching Christ not everybody tastes like Christ he who believes in the Son has eternal life but he who does not obey the Son will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him how do we receive this power I'd like to close with that I'm going to show you five things that I thought of let's turn to James chapter 4 a man can receive nothing except that it is given him you can receive nothing unless it's given to you do you want the life of Christ you could try all you want you could read your Bible you could fast and pray you could grit your teeth and you could try and try and try and try and try and try and you will receive nothing a man can receive nothing that's a promise you will receive nothing but if God gives it to you then you have something a man can receive nothing except have you read the verse that way a man can receive nothing a man can receive nothing a man can receive nothing a woman can receive nothing everybody will receive nothing except the one whom God gives it to and so now you see like Paul said

what do you have that you haven't received I hope that with every day this year it will be the testimony of my life this day whatever I had of this day is just given to me I had a little bit more of Christ today that's my goal and I'm going to I want to be able to say at the end of my life it was just simply given to me I did nothing to deserve it I didn't try harder to be a better husband or a better wife or a better brother or better elder or brother employee no I just went to God and he gave it to me I was a better husband today I was a better father today I was a better brother today I was a better disciple of Jesus Christ today simply because God gave it to me gave me that life think about what of how much of the life of Christ you will have 365 days from now if 365 times you said whatever I had today was just given to me 365 times and not just 365 times every minute of every day oh by the end of 2022 you will really have this but people bite into it and taste it and see that's tasty this is who Jesus was so if you wanted if there's a longing in your heart for this let me show you God's Word James chapter 4 he says first of all don't compare yourself with others or quarrel refuse to fight with anybody anybody wants to pick a fight with you argue about this and even doctrinal arguments well I don't like this or I don't like that just just pull back we don't want to fight somebody criticizes the way you follow Christ or criticizes the stance you take criticisms we receive against this church sometimes we just say we don't want to fight we'll just we don't want to quarrel why because we want the life of Christ the life of Christ is the number one disqualification for receiving the life of Christ is if you quarrel with others or you compare yourself with others he says verse 1 James 4 what is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you he says he's writing to churches to Christians he's not writing to Christians fighting with unbelievers it's Christians fighting amongst themselves within a church like the church in Corinth we read is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members you lust and do not have so you commit murder you are envious and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel now he's not talking about people bringing swords or guns and shooting each other in church no they committed murder with their tongue they gathered in homes privately and spoke evil about the others or spoke evil about somebody else or criticized this in secret they committed murder out of envy and jealousy and a quarreling mentality was going on in James day it's going on today as well he says because you're jealous you don't have until you look at somebody else that has whether it's a ministry or the job they have or the wife they have or the husband they have or the house they have or the the abilities that the health they have you think why how come I'm the one that's always sick you're envious of others so you quarrel and you're jealous and you cannot obtain so decide first of all that this year will be a year where I never compare myself with others and I never quarrel with others if you don't compare yourself with others you won't quarrel there's no reason to quarrel because I have a calling in life God has determined the boundary around me I'm gonna make sure I stay within that boundary and the reward in heaven will be rich it will be equal I'll tell you this there will be people absolutely convinced of this absolutely convinced of this there will be people who I'll have a greater reward in heaven that had a smaller circle drawn around them in terms of earthly ministry they'll have a greater reward in heaven and there will be others who had a larger circle on this earth but have a smaller reward in heaven because they didn't fulfill the circle the circle of their responsibility completely so don't be envious of somebody else who has a greater circle because they've got more to they'll be held accountable for to whom more is given more is required and if God has given you a small circle be content with that be thankful for that and say Lord the reward you get me simply to hear well done good and faithful servant you did what you could you've done all that I asked you to do I drew a small circle and you were faithful within that and somebody else was famous in the eyes of the world will say well Lord look at this big circle you draw around me and he'll say yes but I saw that you only colored this little bit or you didn't color it at all because what you did was wood hay and straw it was done for your own sake and for your own name and for your own glory and it got burned up and so you got this big circle but there's nothing colored in it it got burned up and there's this little housewife again

I'm gonna pick on the housewife who said Lord you drew a small circle you gave me a few children to take care of and a husband to love and to teach other sisters how to love their husbands and to be keepers at home Titus chapter 2 and I did that faithfully Lord he says well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your master these are the only words that keep me going Lord I want to hear you say that so don't quarrel or compare yourself with others secondly he says you do not have because you don't ask having decided that you're not going to compare yourself or with a quarrel with others now you must ask if you just think well Lord you didn't give me any any gift so I'm just gonna sit here no ask if you struggle with knowing what is your function in this church dear brother dear sister dear child there's a simple word number two ask live in a constant state of seeking Lord why did you call me and plant me into River of Life Christian Fellowship as a local expression of your body why not just to sit here and spend my whole days wondering well Lord I'm just here I'm along for the ride I'll tell you this there's nobody who's along for the ride there shouldn't be anybody in this church 100% builders that's a wonderful church where everybody's building up not people who just kind of around along yeah this is where I sit on Sunday morning no such thing there's nobody who's just sitting at RLCF be a builder dear brother dear sister be a part of that now doesn't mean that you have to preach or anything like that carry a burden for the church in your heart pray for others intercede for others let the Lord plant a burden for this group of believers that he's placed you and that's what it means to be a member here yes you might have a burden for others as well there should be a specific burden in the same way that he's given you a family a husband a wife and children that you carry a burden for you don't have to try to do that it's there and so say in the same way there's a specific burden God wants to plant in your heart for this local expression of you of his body that's why he's planted you here that's why you can say I love the brother whom I see and that's how you know that I love God the taste of Christ's love is there because you can see the practical ways and the ways of self-denial in which I give up myself for my husband my wife my children the brothers and sisters he's placed me around and others around in that increasing measure but you must ask I want to tell you my honest testimony this last year the last two or three years I would say is been characterized in my life by this constant seeking where it used to be constant trying before that I was trying to be a Christian trying to be a Christian trying to be a Christian now it's constant seeking I remember this I was somewhere traveling once and somebody said hey you have a few children and can you give us some advice on parenting I said I'm sorry I can't I told him I told them there's a group of people were sitting there I said if you had come to me 13 years ago when I had only one child I could have given you a lot of advice I only had Olivia and I could have given you lots of advice of how to be a godly father and a godly parent but now I've had six and I tell you this only one piece of advice I say make it your prayer Lord help me that's the advice I'll give you to be a godly father and godly parent Lord help me and I reflected back on how I would hold my older children and had all these prayers Lord they're going to do this and they're going to be like that and all these things and there were long prayers I prayed for my children I still pray some long prayers but my prayers are much shorter now Lord help me has just need your help Lord I don't know what tomorrow's going to look like because I've learned from experience that as much as you say well Lord tomorrow's going to look like this in how I'm going to be a husband and a father and then you get to tomorrow and realize it look nothing like that and you tried and you tried and you tried and then you finally gave up and says Lord I'm going to seek your face Lord help me I'm a I believe maybe you can check with Megan afterwards if I am but I believe I'm a better husband today and a better father today because I'm not trying as hard I'm just going to God my face in the dust Lord help me and when I fail I want to be quick to apologize and quick to set things right and say Lord help me Lord help me Lord help me so my prayers to be a better husband and father even as an elder in the church I tell you I had long prayers I would pray before the Lord I want to be like this as an elder I want to be like that as an elder I want to be like do this and do that to reach the lost and

to do this to reach the lost now it's simply Lord help me show me what would you have me do you know this was the prayer Paul prayed says Lord what would you have me do that's it not I want to do this and I want to do the other thing that was before he was converted he says I'm going to be most zealous Jew there was I'm going to be so jealous I'm going to persecute the enemies of God who he thought were the enemies of God then he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and his prayer was immediately changed to not from Lord I'm going to do this for you I'm going to do that other thing Lord what would you have me do help me that was the man who was so effective so live in a state of constant seeking a constant state of seeking seeking seeking seeking seeking seek and keep on seeking you will find it'll just be given to you you'll wake up one morning and realize they're tasting the life of Christ in you you didn't try anything you did this for years and nothing happened and then you started seeking God says Lord I'm gonna lay a hold of you and I'm not gonna let go of you until you give me this I'm not gonna settle for anything that looks good you know the artificial fruit looks better look at this this is perfect this has got some smudges on it a few overripe spots there will be some flaws in you but it's real and I would take this a hundred times out of a hundred even if I have to cut off a little bit of a spot that's overripe until I'm conformed into the image of Jesus fully there will be parts of me that people will taste this man that didn't taste good and I'm sorry yeah you're right I'm not yet there honey but I want to and I will never go back to this artificial so live in a constant state of seeking verse 3 number 3 which is verse 3 your motive make it your motive to only seek the glory of Christ not to be known as a godly man or a godly woman not to be known as this or that your only goal is to seek the glory of Christ she says in verse 3 you verse 3 of James 4 you ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives so that you may spend it on your pleasures he's not talking about lusting and all these things he's talking about asking for good things and I've been convicted about asking God for a good thing so that I can spend it on my pleasures give you an example there was a time when I sought for the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that you would know not you but people I knew would know that I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and you know there's a spiritual person to be known as a spiritual person that's a wrong motive Lord fill me with the Holy Spirit and even if nobody else realizes that you fill me with the Holy Spirit I want Jesus to be exalted I want the glory of God in my life fill me with the Holy Spirit for that reason do you think God will not fill you if that's your purified motive Lord I don't want to be a better preacher I don't want to be a better this or better that or anything simply Lord that you might receive the glory from my life pour out your Holy Spirit upon me let this be your motive you ask because you and don't receive because you ask with wrong motive so that you will spend this good thing that you want me to give you on your own pleasures number four don't doubt God at all he says in chapter 1 James chapter 1 verse 5 but if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach and it will be given to him says again ask but he must ask in faith without any doubting so you cry I know there were times when I cried out for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and I doubted it says Lord I just have a feeling you're not gonna give it to me somehow I'm just not good enough or I failed that way or I don't know I've asked you so many times and you haven't so it's just gonna be like that don't doubt no matter how many times if you've asked God for that which you know is his will even even if you're unsure if it's God's will for example healing we ask for healing we don't know if God is always gonna heal he doesn't always heal but we ask every time without doubting that's the important thing I don't doubt what that God loves me he's my father he knows what's best for me he must ask in faith without any doubting for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind oh God didn't answer so I'm gonna give up I'm gonna try that other thing they come back and says well let me try God again no he didn't answer so I give up ask and keep on asking without doubting I pray that if there's a burden God lays on your heart maybe you're asking for the conversion of a relative and you think well Lord I've been asking for that loved one for years and they haven't broken yet you haven't been broken yet keep asking go back

in faith that we know is God's will God is not willing as that word will you want to know what God's will is he's not willing that any should perish not even one but that all should come to the knowledge of salvation 2nd Peter 3 verse 9 God that's God's will so if you're praying for the salvation of a loved one keep praying I love the testimony of George Muller had five people that God laid on his heart as far as I know one of them was born again in his lifetime the remaining four or something like that happened after he died or maybe it was two in his lifetime and the others his prayers outlived his life are you willing to pray such a prayer God heard the prayer it was sealed in heaven who is it with the eternal God and then George Muller died and the physical evidence of that prayer was not answered but he didn't doubt until his last day and you imagine George Muller on his deathbed thinking about these remaining three I think it was a remaining two I forget do you think he doubted I don't think he did he says Lord I'm about to die but to see you face-to-face but you have to answer that prayer it was the prayer of faith you put that burden on my heart can we pray for our loved ones that way with such faith this is what I don't even need to see how you're gonna work out the answer but you're going to I'm gonna pray in such faith don't doubt yeah and then the last thing I'll say and that is this verse 5 guard once God gives it to you guard it once he gives you the life of Christ guard it be vigilant over it see this verse in first Timothy chapter 6 God will give he will pour out his life upon you he will give you the Holy Spirit but once he receives it it's possible to lose it there's two ways to lose the Holy Spirit I believe the anointing the Holy Spirit one is the quick way and that is the way of pride they're like there's two ways to dump a bucket one is to take it and turn it upside down you will always receive the anointing the Holy Spirit if you're humble that is this cup that's upside that's right side up if you're humble God will always fill it the moment you become proud in a moment I'm not gonna flip this over but because the water is gonna spill but in the moment that if I was outside I would do it the moment you become proud this cup is upside down and everything that is there the anointing in a moment is gone it happened that's how the Satan became the devil Satan became the devil in a moment he was lifted up the one who had the most gift became the devil himself in a moment instantly the sure way to lose the anointing of the Holy Spirit in a moment is to think that you're something that you're somebody immediately God takes your cup turns us upside down says you're my enemy now God resists the proud but he gives grace the spirit of grace to his to the humble they're like cups and a right set up he says fill it Lord fill it so that's the first way to lose the anointing of the Holy Spirit the other way is to put a little hole at the bottom for a little hole it may take a little longer but the anointing will slowly be drained away and one of the ways that Paul says that you can lose the anointing first Timothy chapter 6 verse 20 he says first Timothy 6 verse 20 Oh Timothy guard what has been entrusted to you guarded yes guarded with humility but also make sure there's no holes at the bottom guard what has been entrusted to you by what avoiding worldly and empty chatter are you a chatterbox there's some chatterboxes in the world even in Christendom they just love to chat I got this to say about that and got something else to say about the other thing you know something else to say about anything oh God spoke this to me and here I'm gonna give you the whole sermon that he gave me and chatterboxes chatterboxes chatterboxes it's a sure way to lose the anointing little hole we think well you know what was the point of saying that gossip why does the New Testament speak so much about gossip why do we speak about gossip so much in this church it's not you know slander is one thing when you speak evil of others gossip when you say stuff that's not necessarily evil but it's just juicy information just how did you hear about so-and-so or this little piece of they got engaged or okay so what let them be the one to announce it why do you have to be the one to spread the news whether it's bad news or good news this empty chatter worldly and empty chatter I tell you in the last couple years I've seen so many Christians are taken up with the government and this and the pandemic and the vaccine and all that stuff now what position you take on that is up to you you follow your convictions but don't get drawn into chatter because you lose the anointing that's that's a sure way to

get taken up with all these things that are going on in religious Christendom lose the anointing there was a man a godly monk in the old 1400s I think his name was someone or all the Italian monk and I heard a quote by him he says and it was quoted by Richard Wurmbrandt in a book that he wrote called in God's underground it's a wonderful book he quotes a memorial saying that if the mouth is too much open it loses the heat the the fire in the in the heart in the same way that an open door that the room will quickly lose its heat through an open door I completely butchered the quote but you have to read it sometime that's the essence of what he said he says just like if you open the door and you have the heat running you know it's a common phrase in our perhaps the most commonly spoken word in the Pudín home is shut the front door the heat is off shut the front door the heat is on especially the kids are trying to go in and out and play this shut the front door the heat is on that's a good phrase to put into practice this year shut the front door the heat is on shut the front door the heat is on avoid worldly chatter it's empty and so even if you say what is good now you may say well that what I said was nothing wrong it was something meant to be good but God didn't ask you to say that I'm trying to be I'll tell you my natural temperament is to say a lot and sometimes God calls me to do that but I'm trying to wind that down a little bit and when God says something and speak something my heart says Lord like my natural instinct should be to shut my mouth be slow to speak and quick to listen and then before you say it send it through the fire a second time and a third time and a fourth time and a fifth time and a sixth time and each time it's getting less and less and less and less what happens when you send something to the fire you end up with less than you started out with it's always true and it says the words of the Lord are like refined like silver refined by the fire seven times if you want to speak the words of the Lord this year send it through the fire seven times and you'll find that you have sometimes nothing because you came out realized every single word I was gonna say was myself it was more of this and I refined it and refined it and refined it and then all I ended up with is a small little apple much smaller than anything I could have come up with or nothing at all and God says now go back and I'm gonna speak that was just for you you go back and he gives you another word you refine it refine it and then there's a little one sentence or it's simply saying hey I read this verse and it blessed me and you let the Holy Spirit speak whatever he spoke to you to them privately not you having to give them your interpretation of it and use it's just smart start small we believe in the gift of prophecy in this church your brothers and sisters are we evaluate first Corinthians 14 says earnestly desire to prophesy but this is the root this is the secret to prophecy where we've refined the words where we say less and less of our own ideas which is also why you know you've you've heard us say that we we limit the sharing in the church to those who are members of the church those who have expressed a commitment to this church and say I'm here to build up the body not just somebody who has a cute idea I'm sure there are a lot of people who come as visitors that might have good to say but we want to esteem the gift of prophecy as diamonds in the rough that are more valuable than anything else and we're not here to judge what other people say and you can get plenty of what the world has to say even good things but we want to avoid just the chatter or even intellectual interpretations of what this means what that means and let every word that we say in this church come out of a commitment to care I speak because I care if I was to try to correct your children they have every right to say to me well you're not my dad now they wouldn't say that disrespectfully but they have the right to say or if some stranger comes to your children and tries to correct them you could tell them well that person hasn't demonstrated a care for you but I do as a father I do as a mother I can correct you I can speak words of encouragement to you because I'm living out a commitment to you in my life which is why we preach and and live out commitment in this local body as well there's a sense in which I'm invested in your spiritual welfare and you must be in mine as well and out of that investment where I'm I'm vulnerable and I'm invested I'm a committed and I'm giving up other interests for the sake of your the welfare of this local expression of Christ's body that I speak and I speak a little if you

wonder why we have two minutes is because we were not good yet at limiting and sending it through the fire and I tell you honestly even though I speak and sometimes I speak long this is the desire of my heart I want to speak only what God has spoken and if he's if there's something I said Lord if there's something I said today that you didn't want me to take it away Lord remove it from our minds I pray that and I'm sure there is Lord but you take whatever is of eternal value that which you the Holy Spirit speak and right in our hearts do that Lord my heart I pray do that in every single one that's here from the oldest to the youngest even our children thank you you're on our side you will fill us with your Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ might be exalted thank you in Jesus name amen

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