

Through the Bible - James

by Zac Poonen

The book of James teaches us that faith must produce works, and that we can know if our faith is genuine by going through trials and seeing if our faith produces patience and endurance.

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Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of faith and its connection to producing good works. He highlights various aspects of faith discussed in the book of James, such as overcoming temptation, showing love to all, controlling one's speech, and cultivating purity and patience. The preacher also emphasizes the need for humility and submission to God, warning against judging others and boasting about future plans. Additionally, he addresses the issue of wealth and the responsibility to treat employees fairly, stating that one's treatment of the less fortunate is a reflection of their faith. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging believers to demonstrate their faith through practical acts of kindness and assistance to those in need.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the letter of James. James chapter 1. Let's turn to James chapter 1. In terms of when the letters of the New Testament were written, as far as we know, James was probably the first book of the 27 books of the New Testament written. And that's significant that the very first book, if this is the first book of the New Testament, it was written before the Gospels.

The Gospels were written, at least Mark was probably written the first of the Gospels, was written about two years after James, I think. And if this is the first book of the New Testament, as we think it possibly could be, it's interesting that it speaks about faith that produces works. That's the subject of this book.

Faith that produces works. Because, I think James saw how when faith was being preached for all those 20 years, since the day of Pentecost, after which he wrote this book, he could see how so many people, just like today, had misunderstood faith. It was almost as though faith meant how I live doesn't matter.

The main thing is to believe in Jesus. And so James had this burden, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to write about faith, saying that faith must produce works. And some of the things he talks about in the first chapter, he speaks about faith producing victory over temptation.

In chapter 2, he speaks about faith producing love towards all men, so that you're not partial towards anyone. And in chapter 3, he speaks about how faith will make you, your tongue controlled. You'll be gracious in your speech.

And in chapter 4, he speaks, and 4 and 5, he speaks about how faith can bring purity and patience into my life. A separation from the world, etc. So, he talks about a number of things in these chapters, and all based on faith.

And he's trying to say that if your faith doesn't produce these things, then your faith is not real. It's like the test of a currency note. You got a 500 rupee note from the bank, and you go to the reserve bank and say, I'd like to get this checked.

Is this a genuine note or not? And the reserve bank puts it under a machine and says, Yeah, it's true. Or, it's false. It's good to know now, because we're going to accumulate a lot of wealth, and we want to know whether it's real or not.

We talk about faith, faith, faith, faith. Here's a free check-up. Take it to James, and check whether your faith is real.

So, let's look at this letter with that in mind. First of all, he speaks about the test of our faith. He says, Brethren, you want to find out whether this currency note you got is real? You want to find out whether your faith is real? Okay.

Number 1, verse 2, chapter 1, verse 2, Consider it all joy when you encounter various types of trials. If your faith is genuine, when you get into trial, you'll say, well, praise the Lord. That's just putting the currency note under the machine to find out if it's real or not.

Are you afraid of trial? Are you afraid of putting the currency note under the machine? You're afraid you may find out that it's false? It's a counterfeit note? Isn't it better to know it now, lest you get more notes like that? Isn't it better to know now, if your faith is false? I mean, I would like an earthquake when I'm laying the foundation of a house. Not after I've built the whole thing. I'd like to know right at the foundation level whether it's strong.

That's good. It's a test. And God brings you to a test.

Now, praise God. That test whether I got faith or not. That's what He says.

Consider it all joy that it was tested. And if your faith was faulty, if your foundation was faulty, it's good you discovered it before you built so many stories. Now itself you can rectify it.

So the earlier in your life that you go through trials, the better it is for you. That you discover whether your faith is genuine or not. You say I trust the Lord and you get into some small financial difficulty and you start complaining.

Or you get into a little sickness and you start questioning God's love. Or you get into some opposition from men and you lose your faith. Then you discover that what you had was not genuine.

So consider it all joy when you go and encounter various trials. Because the testing of your faith, this is a test of your faith and it will produce patience. We saw that in Hebrews.

Faith and patience go together. They are like two legs. Faith, patience, faith, patience.

Always I need patience along with my faith. Endurance. And if I allow this endurance to complete its work in me, it will make me perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Look at this goal. Perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. Do you want to reach there? The way is through trial.

There is no other way to get to that place where you are perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. I haven't got there yet. So I know that I have to go through more trials in my life because I haven't got there yet.

Perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. I find many things lacking in my life even today. But if I've acquired something today, it's because I've gone through many trials till today.

But I've got a lot more to go through to reach that goal of perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. Make this your goal. This is God's goal for you.

And you can't get there except through trial where your faith is tested. And don't get discouraged if you discover that your faith was not genuine. Thank you, Lord, for showing it to me.

Now give me the real thing. And God will give you the real thing. And so in those trials, when you lack wisdom, verse 5, what should you do? Go to God and say, Lord, I need wisdom.

Here's a trial come. Here my parents are treating me like this. What do I need now? I need wisdom how to reply to them.

What should I say to them? Here, Lord, I'm in a difficult situation. I'm alone here and all these enemies of the gospel are troubling me. What shall I do? You know what you need? Wisdom.

What should you do if you lack wisdom? It says, ask God. And there's a wonderful thing written here. It's very clear in the living Bible.

It says, And God will not scold you. You know the meaning of scolding? I think all of us have received scoldings from our parents. Or teachers especially.

Teachers are great at scolding. Why did you do this? Or why didn't you do this? And we've all experienced that. But God, it says, never scolds.

Do you know that God never scolds anybody? He corrects but He doesn't scold. And a godly father will correct his children but he won't scold them. Scolding is despising a person.

Oh, you stupid fellow. You're good for nothing. You donkey.

And various names people call others. God never does that. He says, son, what you did is wrong.

I have to punish you for that. To teach you a lesson. But I'll give you some wisdom.

God is always so gentle and gracious. So God never scolds. You don't have wisdom in some situation, go to God.

He won't scold you. He'll say, I'll give it to you. But there's one condition.

When you go to God, you must ask for what you ask in faith. Because if you don't ask in faith, verse 6, you're like the waves of the sea. Sometimes this side, sometimes that side.

Have you seen on a beach? How the waves come into the beach? And then what happens? It goes right back. And then it'll come in. And it'll go back.

And he says, a man who doesn't have faith is like that. He's like that. Trusting the Lord.

Then he loses all his faith. Then he comes in and has faith. Then he loses his faith.

He says, if you ask God like that, I'm not sure He'll give me. Yes, He'll give me. No, He won't give me.

Yes, He'll give me. He'll never get anything. I often say, there is one promise in the Bible for all those who don't have faith.

You know what that promise is? A promise for those who don't have faith. Read it in verse 7. Let not that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord. Yeah, it's true.

It's a promise for all those who don't have faith. Let not that man think that he'll receive anything. He won't get forgiveness.

He won't get baptism in the Holy Spirit. He won't get an answer to pray. He won't get anything.

Don't fall into the category of verse 7 because such a man is double-minded, unstable. Then he goes on to say, if you're a man of faith, he's all speaking about faith that works. Faith will take you through trial.

And if you're a brother, who's very poor, and if you've got faith, you will have a glory. I may be poor. I don't have so many clothes as that other rich brother has.

I don't have a big fancy house like he has. I've got only a cycle. I don't have a car like he has.

But he glories. I'm a child of God. He doesn't sit there envying his brother.

He says, that's up to him. But I'm a son of God. I'm a son of a king.

That's what the brother, who's very poor, glories in. He doesn't want other people to feel sorry for him. Oh, poor man.

He's living in a hut. I hope everybody sees. I'm so poor.

No. He says, I'm a son of a king. I'm a servant of the Lord.

I've got a dignity about me. And I'm actually wealthier than all of you. Because I've got wealth up there in heaven.

That's the position of a poor brother, who's got faith. In the same way, a rich brother, who's got faith, he'll look around at his house, and his property, and his car, and his umpteen clothes. And he will say, all of this will pass away.

All of this will pass away, like the grass. One day it's there. Verse 10.

Then it disappears. All these things that I have, will pass away. So, whether you're poor or rich, it tells you here, what you should say.

If you're poor, glory in your high position, in Christ. If you're rich, keep telling yourself, that your clothes, and your house, and your property, and your car, and everything that you have, is all going to disappear one day. Like the grass.

Because when the sun will rise, and the grass is withered, and the flower falls off, and the beauty is destroyed, so to the rich man, in the midst of his pursuits, he himself will fade away. If he lives for those things, a rich man who lives for those things, he himself will fade away. But if he's rich, and he doesn't live for those things, those things will fade away, and he will remain.

And so, another mark of a man, who has got faith, is that he perseveres under trial. It continues to speak about this thing, but in a different context. Now he's talking about temptation to sin.

The earlier trial was speaking about difficulties in life. Now he's talking about temptation to sin. He says, when you are tempted, you will overcome.

And you will receive a crown of life. Because, that's what God has promised, to all those who love Him. So that teaches us, that if you love the Lord, you will endure in temptation.

And when a temptation comes, don't ever say, God, why did you send this to me? Because God never sent it. God does not tempt anybody. Very clear in verse 13.

Let no one say, when he's tempted, God is tempting me. God doesn't tempt anyone. Then who is tempting you? Well, it says, the devil tempts us.

But the devil tempts us, because, we have some desires, which correspond with the devil's desires. See, like the enemy in a war, if India has a war with Pakistan, Pakistan will send some agents, inside India, to find out things, and to blow bombs in India, to make it difficult for us here. They won't only fight in the battle front, here also.

In the same way, the devil has got some agents inside us, who are actually on his side. And you got to identify those agents, and those are the lusts in your flesh. You have desire for this, and desire for this, which are not godly desires, and you don't put them to death.

They are on the enemy's side. You will always be tempted by those desires. So the only way is, at least you put the agents of the enemy to death, inside your country.

Then you can fight the enemy at the battle front. That's what India does. India will always catch the agents of the enemy, and put them in prison.

Then they can fight more freely on the battle front. The devil has got agents inside you, all these lusts. It says, put them to death.

And then you will find that, the battle is easier out there. So that's what he is saying. You are tempted by the lusts within you, which are on the enemy's side.

The enemy is out there, the devil. And when this desire, you know, your mind agrees with it and says, yes, I think I will yield to this desire. Sin comes out.

Until that point, it was only temptation. Like, you know, if you are tempted with your eyes. The first look is temptation.

The second look is sin. Like you are walking down the road, and you see something accidentally, which tempts you. That's not a sin.

You got tempted in your mind. But then you turn around to look again. That is the sin.

The first look is temptation, and the second look is sin. You can't avoid the first look, because we are living in a world where there is so much filth. But after that, you decide whether you want to agree with it or not.

When you agree with it, there is a union. There is a conception. Like when a man and a woman come together, there is a conception.

That's the word used here. When my mind agrees with the lust in my flesh, there is a union. Then whenever there is a union, there is a conception.

And sin is born. But otherwise, if my mind doesn't agree with it, temptation comes. I say, no, I don't want that.

I reject it in my mind. The fact that the temptation comes doesn't mean it's sin. Remember that.

Like somebody said, you can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair. Okay? The birds flying over your head is temptation. Thoughts coming into your mind.

So many thoughts. That's not sin. A filthy thought comes.

What's that? Temptation. But if you allow it to make a nest there, to settle down there, then it becomes sin. That means your mind has agreed to it.

Yeah, I'd like to have that thought. I'd like to enjoy it. And if you enjoy it, even for five seconds, you sin.

But if you reject it, you can't avoid thoughts coming in because that's how the devil tempts. How did the devil tempt Jesus? By putting thoughts into his mind. He rejected it every time, saying, no, it's written.

And he didn't sin. So don't get discouraged because thoughts come into your mind. Thoughts are temptation.

If you accept those thoughts and enjoy them, then you sin. That's a great liberation for us to understand that, that a conception has to take place before sin is born. Every woman knows that.

A conception has to take place before a baby is born. If there's no conception, there's no baby. In the same way we can have thoughts coming in, but if my mind doesn't agree with that, there's no sin.

But if I allow my mind to agree with it, then it becomes sin and the final result is, verse 15, spiritual death. So don't be deceived about this, verse 16. Then he tells us in verse 17 that every good and perfect gift comes from above.

Victory over temptation cannot come from beneath, from myself. It has to come from above. I have to ask Him.

Whatever God gives is perfect. Good gifts only come from above. Let's ask Him for it.

And especially, since He does not change, there's no variation in Him, verse 17, and also He brought us forth into the world so that we might be an example. First fruits means like an example among all His creation. Jesus brought me to salvation.

We are born again so that we might be examples in creation. And if that is God's will, won't He help me to overcome sin so that I can be an example to creation? He certainly will. Any of you who feel God won't help you to overcome sin, I tell you He will.

You are the first fruits of creation. You are to be an example in all of creation. And you say, Lord, how can I be an example if you don't help me? Here I am in this lonely place and I'm struggling to live a holy life.

Please help me. And God will help you, certainly. Okay.

Then He speaks a little bit about our speech. He says, let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Now, most of us are the opposite.

We are slow to hear and quick to speak. Now, I want to... If you follow this verse, I believe it's a help to overcoming anger. And any of you who have a big problem with anger and not able to control your tongue, let me give you a little advice to help you overcome anger.

What should you do? When people are speaking, learn to listen to them. Don't interrupt them and give your opinion. In normal conversation, many people have this habit.

Somebody is speaking and they have to give their opinion immediately. Hang on. Just listen.

Listen. Quick to hear and slow to speak. And gradually, this becomes your habit.

Quick to hear, slow to speak. Quick to hear, slow to speak. Quick to hear, slow to speak.

You know what will happen in your life? You will also be slow to anger. So, try this prescription and see if your disease is not healed. It will be healed.

When we are slow to speak, we will be slow to anger. And the other thing it tells us, don't think that by anger you can fulfill God's purposes. Never.

Anger never achieves the righteousness of God. You go into some church situation and you are angry with people, that will not accomplish God's righteousness. Anger never accomplishes God's righteousness.

A concern for God's glory, that's what accomplishes His righteousness. Verse 21, Let us put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. That means even when you think you have put aside all filthiness, there is still something that remaining at the bottom.

You know it's like if you take a cup of coffee which you have drunk and you say, this is bad coffee. I am going to empty it out. And you empty it into the sink.

You think the cup is clean? What do you think? No. You look inside, there is still something stuck at the bottom. You empty the filthiness and still there is something remaining of wickedness.

It says, our heart and soul is like that. You think, I have confessed all my sin. Just hang on.

Ask the Lord to show you. You will see something stuck inside. Cleanse it out.

Don't be so quick to say, I have confessed all my sin. I have made all my restitution. Ask God to show you.

Even after you put aside all what you know to be filthy, you will find something remaining. In humility, acknowledge that, verse 21. And receive what God says.

It will save your soul. And when God tells you something, verse 22, do it. Don't just hear it.

Those who only hear and don't do, are like people who go to the, in the morning, when you go to the mirror, to wash your face, you see the mirror, you see there is some dirt on your face, maybe you worked outside somewhere and and you don't clean it. And then you go away and now there is no mirror so you think your face is clean. It's not clean.

You saw it in the mirror and you didn't wash it. Sometimes you come to a meeting, it's like that and the preacher holds up a mirror. God's word is a mirror.

And you see your face. You say, Oh Lord, so much evil in my heart, I didn't even know that. Now I see it.

And then you go away from the meeting and you completely forget what you heard in the meeting. He says, don't be like that. If God showed you something in the meeting, it's like an x-ray.

I think if James were writing today, he would have used the word, x-ray. He shows you something, set it right. Set it right.

Don't forget what God spoke to you in the meeting. Don't forget what God spoke to you when you were reading his word. God's word is like, is the law of liberty.

It says in verse 25, it's come to set you free. It's not like the Old Testament law of bondage. The New Testament law is the law of liberty, verse 25.

And then he gives one word, which is a very challenging word that has helped me, like a challenge for me, all through many, many years in my life, verse 26. If anyone thinks he's a godly man, and he cannot control his tongue, he's deceiving himself. I want to say that to all of you.

Please remember it all your life. If you cannot control your tongue, your godliness is worth zero. It says there, it is worthless.

Worthless means it's worth zero. All your activity, all your work for the Lord, all this, that and the other, everything is worth zero if you cannot control your tongue. Do you know how important controlling the tongue is in the Christian life? So often, we get a bad testimony because we don't control our tongue.

And even when we say something to someone, we say it in such a hard way. It's like that. Have you seen how sometimes you see some fault in a person, and you immediately point out that? It's a nature in us.

I've seen that sometimes. Maybe I've made a slight factual mistake in something I said in a meeting. And at the end of the meeting, somebody will come to me.

He will not say one word of all the blessing he got from that meeting. He'll say, Brother, this one thing you said was wrong. And I say, I agree.

You're right. I was wrong there. But I feel sorry for him because that's all he got from the meeting.

All that he got from the meeting was that he saw one wrong thing. Our nature is like that. We tend, even in our speech, we tend to find fault rather than appreciate.

It's nature. And if you don't change your nature, if you don't allow the Holy Spirit to change your nature, your usefulness to God will also be zero. Control your tongue.

Ask the Holy Spirit to control it. And he says, true Christianity, I would paraphrase it like that, verse 27, is not just a question of going to meetings and singing songs and reading the Bible and increasing in Bible knowledge. It's practical.

It's caring for those who are in need. Orphans, widows, helping those who are in need, who are in distress. Now, if a widow or an orphan is well off, you don't have to worry about them.

But widows and orphans who are in distress, caring for the poor, it's a very important part of true Christianity. A true servant of God will seek to serve poor people more than rich people. He will go to poor churches more than rich churches.

He will go to village churches more than city churches. He will go where people cannot give him money rather than where people can give him money. That is true Christianity.

Caring for the poor. He will fellowship with poor brothers rather than rich brothers. He will seek for fellowship with the poor and the lowly rather than with the great and mighty people.

But do you see that in a lot of Christian workers today? Very rare. There are very few true servants of the Lord. But you can be one like that.

Decide that you care for those who are weak and poor in the church. And at the same time, keep yourself completely unspotted, keep yourself unstained by the world. He says this is true Christianity.

True Christianity is a life that cares for the poor and keeps oneself unstained. And then he goes on on that subject in chapter 2 verse 1 to say How do you treat the rich people and poor people in the church? One rich man comes with a golden ring and dressed in fine clothes and you give him a special seat. Brother, please come and sit here.

And a poor man comes in ragged clothes and you tell him in verse 3 Why you can sit over there somewhere? Just find a place for yourself. And he says Aren't you evil when you do that? When you treat a rich brother in the church with such honor and the poor brother you treat in a despised way? You're not a servant of God. You're just like any other worldly person.

The worldly person also treats that rich man with favor. You know how much of this there is in the church? Plenty of it. I saw in my younger days when I went to different churches all denominations.

I saw one thing. I mentioned this before that the rich people and the influential people were always board members in the church. Was it because they were spiritual? No.

They had high positions in society and so they were given honor. Just like here. Please come and sit on our board because you're a rich person.

And the poor man Ah! You can't be a board member. You don't have any influence. You don't have any money.

You may be spiritual but we don't care for that. What type of church are you going to build with that type of attitude? It won't be the church of Jesus Christ. I'll tell you that.

He says when you do that you sin. You've done things with evil motives. Do you know that God has chosen, verse 5, the poor people rich in faith? Do you know that God has promised his kingdom to these poor people? Verse 5. But you dishonor the poor man.

What do the rich people do when they sit on your board? One day they get offended with you and they drag you to court. Yeah. Only a rich person can drag people to court because you need money to go to court.

A poor person can't drag anybody to court. Jesus and the poor disciples couldn't drag anybody to court. How is it churches drag other people to court today? Because they are rich.

And these rich people are the ones who blaspheme the fair name by which you've been called. Then you're not loving your neighbor as yourself. If you love your neighbor as yourself, verse 8, you will not show partiality.

But if you show partiality, verse 9, you are committing sin. Do you know that any person who shows partiality is committing sin? It's a sin to show partiality in the church or anywhere. Because, don't say you've done so many other good things.

He says for example, if you don't commit adultery but you commit murder, verse 11, aren't you a sinner? Of course. So in the same way, he says partiality is a sin like adultery and murder. That's the point.

Just like murder is a sin, adultery is a sin, partiality is a sin. What would you think of a pastor who commits murder and adultery? I think just the same of a pastor who shows favoritism to some rich person. What would you think of a preacher who lives in murder and adultery? I would say a preacher who shows partiality to rich people is as good as a preacher who commits murder or adultery.

No difference. So he says, be careful. In verse 12 and 13, he's speaking about judging.

Don't judge people by their external appearance, whether they are rich or poor. When you do that, you're being merciless. You're being merciless to that poor man.

And if you are merciless to poor people and to those who perhaps somebody has sinned, has fallen, don't be merciless to him. Because if you're like that to people one day, verse 13, when God judges you, He'll show you no mercy in your life. You know, when somebody harms you and you don't forgive him, remember James 2.13, you don't show mercy to that man, one day God will show no mercy to you.

See, when somebody does some harm to me, there are two voices rising in my heart. Judge him, be merciful to him. Judge him, be merciful to him.

Which voice is going to win? It says here, verse 13, last part, mercy must win. Mercy, the voice of mercy must win over the voice of judgment. Then, in the final day, God will be merciful to you also.

And then in verse 14 to 26, He speaks about making our faith produce works in terms of helping people who are in need. You see a brother who's in need of food or clothes, you don't help him, your faith is useless. Now, I'm not saying that you've got to buy him a car or a scooter.

He's talking about food and clothes, necessities of life. We don't have to help a brother to live in luxury, but if a brother is shivering in the cold, he doesn't have a blanket, or his house is leaking, and he can't sleep properly at night, what's the use of saying, praise the Lord, brother, we'll pray about that? No use praying about it, give him some money to fix the roof. That's practical Christianity.

Help him. But you say, well, I've got faith. But I say, it's no use of faith, if you don't have works.

That's what he's saying. Abraham had faith, verse 21, but he offered up his son, he had works. And that's, his faith was proved by his works, and that's how he was saved.

And if you've got faith, and it doesn't produce any works like Abraham's, that faith is not real faith. He's putting the currency note under the machine, and it says, this is not a genuine note, this is not genuine faith. And he speaks about Rahab again.

It's interesting, Rahab the harlot is mentioned at least three times in the New Testament. Matthew, Hebrews, and James. And then here is a wonderful verse.

We could say it's the central verse of the whole episode. Verse 26. As the body without breath is dead, so faith without works is dead.

In other words, as I said the other day, if we think of the fingers and parts of our body like correct doctrine, you can have all the parts of your body, all correct doctrine, but if you don't have breath, you're dead. So in the same way he says, your faith can have so many things of doctrine which are correct, but if it does not produce works, that faith is useless. In chapter 3, he speaks about the tongue.

And there's a whole chapter here about the tongue. In the book of Proverbs, you know, it says a lot about the tongue, about wisdom, speech, when on the day of Pentecost it was a tongue of fire that came upon people's heads. I don't know whether that speech and carefulness of speech has been sufficiently emphasized in Christendom.

I want to encourage all of you, if you're serious about serving God, please take this matter of the control of your tongue very seriously. I believe this is one of the main reasons why many people don't have the word of God when they stand up to speak it. As I told you before, there are two reasons.

One, they are not faithful with money. That's why God doesn't give them the true riches to speak in the meeting. Second, they are not careful with their speech in their private conversation.

They joke and play the fool and speak so many idle words and suddenly when they come to the pulpit, they expect God to speak through them. God will not speak through them. If God is to speak through you in the pulpit, He must speak through you when you're sitting with your friends in that room.

If you don't allow Him to speak through you when you sit with your friends in your room, He will not, He will not speak through you in the pulpit. That's why the tongue is so important. He says, your tongue is like the

rudder of a ship.

Verse four, like the bits you put into horses mouths. Have you seen a horse? Have you seen a picture of a wild horse without any control? You see, all the horses that we see that pull carts, they've got a bit and bridle in their mouth by which the driver turns the cart this way or that way. But these wild horses you see in pictures sometimes, out in the wild, has nothing in their mouth, they run wild, they are useless.

What do you think those horses are accomplishing? Nothing. Even the horses that take part in a horse race, they win a medal because they got a bit in their mouth. Those wild horses get nothing.

Horses which pull carts accomplish something. You want to accomplish something in your life or you want to be like a wild horse, just runs around the whole day and wastes its life? Or do you want to be like a horse that wins a medal? Like those race horses? Or the horses that pull carts and shift things from one place to another? Then let God put a bit and a bridle in your mouth today and say Lord, control my speech from today. You see these ships, do you know that one of the most important parts of a ship is a little thing at the back called a rudder? And when you turn the rudder one way the ship turns.

The same direction you turn the rudder, the ship turns in that direction. You turn the rudder the other way, the ship turns in that direction. You turn it back this way, the ship turns in this direction.

One little piece of metal at the back of a ship turns that huge ship in the direction which it is to go. It can go from west to east with just a small rudder at the back. And He says your tongue is like that.

It's a rudder. Which way are you going to go? The whole ship is going to go depending on which way you turn your tongue. How many of us believe that? It's what God's word says.

Your tongue is the test of your spirituality. It's not your activity, not your knowledge, not how many places you travel and how many meetings you go to and how much you do so called God's work. Let me see which way your tongue turns.

That is the direction you're going. Because the rudder determines the direction of the ship. All these examples He uses to say that the importance of the tongue, it's a small part of the body, but boy, verse 5, what a fire.

It's the fire of hell, verse 6, with which many people's tongues are set, set on fire with hell. And then He says in verse 7 and 8, you know nobody can tame the tongue. You've seen in circuses, lions are tamed, tigers are tamed, people can even put their head inside a lion's mouth in a circus and the lion doesn't bite it.

Lions have been tamed, but this tongue, no man can tame. Then what shall we do? We shall ask the Holy Spirit to tame it. That's why on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell upon people, a tongue of fire came upon their heads to say, nobody can control this tongue, but the Holy Spirit will control it.

That is the real baptism in the Holy Spirit. And the speaking in tongues was only an outward symbol of the fact that from now onwards the Holy Spirit wants to control my tongue. When I speak in unknown tongues or mother tongue or anything, He wants to control my tongue.

Many people haven't understood it. It's a great tragedy that today many, many people who speak about the baptism in the Holy Spirit do not speak about the control of the Holy Spirit over their mother tongue,

but only other tongues. There's something wrong there.

It's a counterfeit. I believe it's a counterfeit spirit that's operating in so many of these churches. Because they give them other tongues, but cannot control their mother tongue.

What type of Holy Spirit is that? I remember when the Holy Spirit came upon me and I spoke in other tongues. It began to control my mother tongue also. That's how I know it was the Holy Spirit and not some other spirit.

You apply this test. If you got other tongues and you can't control your mother tongue, brother it must be some other spirit. Renounce it.

Say, I don't want that spirit. I want a spirit that can help me to speak in other tongues and control my mother tongue. That's how I know it's genuinely the Holy Spirit.

So much of counterfeit and deception. Put the currency note under the machine and when the machine gives you an answer saying this is a counterfeit, accept it. When the machine says that's another spirit, okay, it's another spirit.

It's not the Holy Spirit. Okay, so the Holy Spirit only can control it. What's used? Blessing the Lord in the meeting, verse 9, and then cursing men after the meeting.

No, it shouldn't be like that. And then it says if you're a wise man, verse 13, let show your wisdom in the gentleness in your actions, in the gentleness of wisdom. Now there are two things he says which can never be found in a wise man.

If you're a wise man or a wise woman, how do you know whether you're wise? There'll be two things that'll never be found in your life. One, verse 14, bitter jealousy. The second thing, verse 14, selfish ambition.

If you have got jealousy of others, you're not wise. Whatever knowledge you have. And if you've got selfish ambition, where you want to show that you're better than that person, you want to show you can preach better than him, pray better than him, you send a report showing that your church is better than his, your work is better than his, you brought more people to the Lord than him.

Brother, that's selfish ambition. That's not wisdom. That's a wisdom from beneath.

He speaks later on. Such wisdom comes from beneath. It's earthly, natural, demonic.

This is related to body, soul, and spirit. Earthly, soulish, demonic. That's the meaning here.

Evil spirits. Body, soul, and spirit. Earthly, soulish, inspired by evil spirits.

That's demonic. And again he speaks about jealousy, verse 16, and selfish ambition. Do you know the amount of jealousy that is in Christendom? You see God blessing somebody else's work and you're jealous of him.

And you want to find some fault in him. Criticize him. Go ahead.

What does it show? Your wisdom is earthly, soulish, and demonic. Instead of rejoicing, well, praise God, I can't do what he's doing. God bless him.

He's 20 years younger than me, but God's blessing him mightily and he's able to do a much better work than I could ever do in my life. I rejoice. Praise the Lord.

That's a wise man. Selfish ambition is when you want to show I can also do that. Yeah, yeah, he's doing all that because he's got all these other reasons, all these things behind him.

Why do you criticize? Why not appreciate what somebody is doing for the Lord, even if he doesn't agree with everything that you believe in? I've decided long ago that I'm going to rejoice when other people do something for the Lord. That judge is God. He'll judge them after they die.

I don't have to judge them now. I commit that to the Lord and say, Lord, I don't know, but I praise the Lord that he's reaching people for Christ. Many of the great servants of God today by great, I don't mean they're great.

Let's say well-known. Well-known doesn't mean great. They may not be great in God's eyes, but there are many well-known servants of God who are being used to bring many, many people to hear the gospel.

Many thousands of people come to their meeting and they hear the gospel and they hear about Jesus. And some of their methods we can't quite agree with. Okay, don't work with them.

Don't cooperate with them. That's fine. But why should we criticize them? There's no need to all the time spent saying he's like this and he's like this, like this.

Thank God they are doing something for the Lord. What are you doing? You know, you can criticize a work where somebody is doing missionary work somewhere and you say, well that's not being done properly. Ask yourself what are you doing over there for the Lord? In that particular area of North India.

You're doing nothing except criticizing. At least can't you keep your big mouth shut and let the other person do something? No. You have to keep your mouth open and keep on saying something.

This is the devil. This is 100% the devil. You think you're spiritual.

You're not. I believe we all need to learn a lesson here. The wisdom that's from above has got seven pillars.

Verse 17. It's pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering and without hypocrisy. In chapter 4 he speaks about friendship with the world as being enmity towards God.

Verse 4. If you love this world, he says, you are an adulteress. James 4.4. Anyone who loves this world is actually unfaithful to her marriage vows with Jesus Christ, a bridegroom. That's the seriousness of loving this world.

You cannot love this world and be a friend of God. Anyone who is a friend of this world, verse 4, is an enemy of God. And this world's principles and way of life is so different from God's that if you align yourself with this world, by friendship with the world doesn't mean you have friends in the world.

He's talking about friendship with this world's system, the principles of this world. If you are aligned with that, you're an enemy of God. This world's sense of values is directly opposed to God.

And if you have faith, you will reject this world's sense of values and live by God's sense of values. Verse 5 says that God jealously desires the spirit he has placed in us. He's breathed in us and put a spirit within us.

That spirit, the Holy Spirit, desires jealously for Jesus. He doesn't want to be polluted with this world. Keep it for Jesus and he will give us grace.

Verse 5, verse 6, if we are humble. He will give us grace to keep ourselves unspotted by the world. Verse 6 is a very serious verse.

God fights against proud people but he supports humble people. Let me put it like that. If you're a humble person, God will always support you.

If you're a proud person, he will always fight against you. This is the picture I get in my mind. If I'm proud, God is in front of me, pushing me back.

I mean, the devil is already pushing me back. The lusts in my flesh are pushing me back. And if God is also pushing me back, where will I be after some time? I'll be way back there.

But if I'm proud, God will keep on pushing me back. But if I'm humble, even though the devil opposes me and my lusts in my flesh oppose me, God will get behind me and push me forward. So who's going to make spiritual growth? The one who is humble.

That's why I told you the three secrets of the Christian life are humility, humility, humility. Learn it. Because God mightily supports humble people.

Whenever you get thoughts in your mind of pride, oh, I'm so smart. I know so much of the Bible. God used me.

Brother, be careful. God is moving around from the back to the front to push you back now if you're not careful. Humble yourself and go before God and say, Lord, that was not my ability, that was yours.

Give the glory to God. This is the most important thing. Yeah.

Humility. Submit to God and resist the devil. If you try to resist the devil without submitting to God, you're going to get into problems.

Draw near to God and He'll draw near to you. Humble yourself in the presence of the Lord. Verse 11, it says again about judging others, don't speak evil against others.

Verse 13 to 17, it says don't boast that you can do this, that and the other tomorrow. Remember that your life is in God's hands and if God permits you, you go somewhere. Give Him the credit that your life is in God's hands.

Chapter 5. Again, He speaks to the rich people. He says, come you rich people, you need to weep and howl because of all the judgment that's coming upon you because you have trusted in your gold and your silver and they're all not going to help you in the last day and how did you make so much money? Verse 4, you didn't pay your servants properly. You know, I've come across a lot of believers who shout loudly in the meeting and preach and all that but they don't pay their servants who work in their home properly.

I say, I can find out whether you're a man of faith by the salary you give to your servants at home. If you're stingy, miserly, you never get a new pair of clothes for that poor girl who works for you. What's the use shouting hallelujah in the meeting? God says, forget it.

Go and do something for that poor girl who works in your home. The salary you pay to your workers at home is a test of your faith. Do you know that? If you're stingy and miserly in your attitude to poor people, your faith is worth zero.

You don't pay those people properly and so you have more money. There's a curse on that money. It says, it'll consume your flesh, verse three.

That money which you've stored up in your bank because you didn't pay some of your workers properly, that money will rot and you'll get leprosy with that. That's serious. And he says, the cry of those poor people has gone to God.

He's heard it. Lord, this believer, look how he treats me. He doesn't pay me properly.

There's a lot of that in these days. And then he says a word to those who are suffering at the other end. He's saying, okay, you're suffering because somebody treats you like that.

Just be patient, verse seven. The Lord is coming. And like a farmer waits for the harvest, you also wait.

The Lord will reward you. Be patient, verse eight. Strengthen your hearts.

Don't complain. Leave it to God. Let God judge that person.

The judge is right at the door. He'll come any moment and he'll judge those people who are harming you. Don't complain against them.

If you're suffering and you're afflicted, look at the example of the prophets. Every single prophet suffered like that. And look at the example of Job, verse 11.

What a lot he suffered. How he suffered patiently and finally see how God blessed him. You also, if you have to go through suffering because a lot of other people are ill-treating you and suppressing you because you're poor and needy, don't worry.

Be faithful there. And one day God will come and deal with all that and He will bless you double. James had a great concern for poor people.

And then he says about not swearing. Let your yes be yes and your no no. A number of exhortations finally.

Are you suffering? Verse 13. Pray. Are you cheerful? Praise the Lord.

Sing praises. Are you sick? What should you do when you're sick? Call for the elders of the church. Ask them to take a little oil, symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Anoint you and say this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus, take care of your temple. Preserve it healthy.

In Jesus' name, let him have a taste of resurrection power. And the prayer offered in faith will heal the sick. I believe in healing.

Sometimes I don't know why healing doesn't take place. I know sometimes I've prayed for people and they've been healed. And sometimes I've prayed for people and they're not healed.

And I said, Lord, why did that happen? And the Lord says, there are things in their life you don't know anything about. I say, okay, I'll leave it. My duty is to pray.

Because sometimes it's due to sin. Verse 15. So confess your sins, it says, to one another.

Verse 16. And then you'll be healed. Not all sickness is due to sin.

Some sickness is due to sin. And if you don't confess those sins, no matter how many elders come and anoint you with oil, you'll never be healed. You've got to confess that sin.

At the same time, there's another reason. Sometimes, one prayer is not enough. You've got to keep praying.

Like Elijah. He prayed earnestly and it did not rain. And then he prayed again, earnestly.

And you know how he prayed. Speaking about prayer for healing. He sent a servant.

Any sign of rain? No. It's like saying, any sign of healing? No. Okay, let's pray again.

Any sign of rain? No. Any sign of healing? No. Okay, let's pray again.

How many people pray like that? Most people just pray once. Rain didn't come. Okay, maybe it's not God's will.

Elijah didn't say it's not God's will. Sometimes, God wants us to persist in prayer. Lord, why should I be sick? I want to be healthy to serve you.

I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray.

You're going to heal me. You're going to keep me fit to serve you. Pray that in a time of sickness.

I'm not saying that every sickness will be healed. But I believe that God wants us to be fit and healthy to serve him. Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

Young people will faint and old people will rise up with wings like eagles because they wait on the Lord for their strength. Be one who waits on the Lord. One last word.

If you find a man in sin and you turn him, you're doing a wonderful work for the Lord. So let's manifest our faith by these works. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to have a faith that's manifested in our life, in the control of our speech and victory over sin, in graciousness and love to others, purity and patience in our own life. We pray in Jesus' name.

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