

James 4:11-17 - July 10, 2022
Three Crucial Questions for Christians
J.D. Farag

Today we are in James, and Lord willing, we'll finish *Chapter 4*. Our text will be *verses 11-17*.

So what I'll do is ask those of you that are here to stand. We want to also welcome our online viewers as well. James, by the Holy Spirit, is writing and says, *verse 11*, **"Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it – but sitting in judgment on it.**

There is only one Lawgiver [Verse 12] and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor? Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

How are you doing? You doing okay so far? Almost done.

"Instead, [Verse 15] you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."

Let's pray if you would please join with me. We'll ask God's blessing on our understanding of His Word. Loving Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves before You. We commit our hearts to You, and Lord, we want to focus on You, and we need for the Holy Spirit, indwelling us, to enable us to do that.

Because unless You get our attention and hold our attention, we're going to miss what it is that You have for us today here in Your Word. And this is a powerful and very important passage of Scripture, obviously.

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So, Lord, would You, as only You can, and are always so faithful to, just speak into our lives in that oh, that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. You're so gentle and so loving and so kind and so patient when You do.

And we thank You for that, Lord. We ask You for this in Jesus' name, Amen and Amen. You can be seated, thank you.

So I made the decision to teach the text that we have before us this morning by posing three crucial questions for us as Christians, specifically as it relates to the seriousness of how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ and how it is that we view our own lives in this world, not our homes.

We somehow fancy ourselves as this world being our final destination, like we're going to be here for a while. So we're all busy about making all these plans, long-term plans. Nothing wrong with having plans.

But James, I hope you're coming to appreciate this about the apostle James, I mean, he pulls no punches, right? But I mean, he just hits it head on.

You're so arrogant thinking that you're going to do this and do that, and you boast about it, and you've got plans for it. And what you don't realize is your life is – some of your translations render – I'm sorry if I'm pointing at anybody. I don't mean to do that intentionally.

But your life is a vapor. It's like, poof! That's it. That's what your life is. That's what our life is. We actually talked a little bit about this in the Prophecy Update.

It's my hope and my prayer that all of us, myself included, maybe myself especially, will better understand from this text why the church today is so feckless in this last hour. I think

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we have the answer to that question of why the church is so ineffective, no impact on the world.

In fact, it's the opposite, the world has impacted the church, The church does not influence the world. The world has influenced the church. And I think we have, at least in part, the answer as to why that is. So we've got three questions before us today.

Let's allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and see if there be anything in us that would keep us from knowing Him and loving Him and hearing Him. Because you know, when the Lord speaks, He doesn't raise His voice.

Because there's a lot of voices clamoring for our attention. Would you agree?

When He speaks, He speaks in that still, small, refining, I mean, almost piercing voice. I think about that proverb that says, a soft answer breaks a bone.

You know, when someone's yelling at you, you know, kind of like I do – I'm working on that. I should say the Lord's working on me on that. But when somebody is yelling at you, don't you kind of tune them out?

But it's when somebody whispers, they've got your attention. It's a very old commercial; I'm going to date myself when I use it. I think it was a shampoo commercial. and it starts off like – Stop laughing. I haven't even said it yet.

It starts off like this: You want to get somebody's attention, whisper. That's what the Lord does. He wants to get our attention.

I had a teacher in high school, Mr. Bowman. First day of class, Oh, man, I mean – You know those people, If you're one of those people, we love you. God bless you. We wish we were

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like you, by the way. But you just have this voice that's, you know, calming and soothing.

You're quiet, soft spoken, as we say.

Anyway, this was Mr. Bowman. He talked in a monotone, very low volume. And so he's like, okay, class, I'd like to have you take your seat at this time and leave it to me to yell, Hey, speak up, we can't hear you! That was a mistake.

His response was: No, you want to hear me? This is how I talk; this is how I speak. You want to hear me? You need to quiet down. I think we would do well if we turned the volume of our busy and stressful lives down so that we can hear that still, small voice of the Lord when He speaks. And I hope that's today as we go through this.

Let's start with the first question in verse 11, Do I slander other people?

Here again, James, true to form, much-needed sanctified strength writes that we are not to slander others as brothers and sisters in Christ. And he explains the reason why, being that doing so is to speak against the law and judge the law sitting in judgment on it and not keeping of it.

In other words, we're posturing and positioning ourselves as judge, and we've already delivered a verdict. And we slander people in a myriad of ways.

And dare I say that in our day, Christians do this every day and in every way on social media. And you know what's sad? The world sees every single post.

And here they know that you're a professing Christian. In fact, you've even tried unsuccessfully, gee, I wonder why, to share the gospel with them and then they see what you just posted about somebody.

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I've often asked the question, I suppose in some regards it's rhetorical, but the question I ask and ask even of myself, I'm very careful in this regard. How do you expect to share Jesus with someone that you've just slandered?

Maybe I need to take it a step further. I think you would agree with this, that if somebody slandered someone else to you behind their back, you got to know they're slandering you to them behind your back.

Let's get back to this social media thing. This is a big issue. Every single post on social media... I don't know what it is. Maybe I should speak for myself because I know there was a time early on when I was young in the Lord, where man, of course I had more energy then, but I wanted a good fight. Let's do this!

But what you don't realize is you might win the battle, but you're going to lose that opportunity to win that person to Christ. Because again, you have to understand that the world's watching Christians very closely.

The apostle Paul says that we're living epistles. Do you know what that means? We are living letters. People are reading the letters / posts of our life. What are they reading? What does it read like?

John's Gospel, Chapter 13. May I invite you to join me there? I want to read two verses; you know them well. Jesus is speaking, and He says, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** [*And then He says this, verse 35*] **By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

Owie, Maui. Ouch!

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Wait, so in other words, people are going to know that I'm a disciple of Jesus by my love, one for another?

Yeah.

You mean not the things, the Christian stuff I have on the back of my car? Which I don't by the way, for, you know, anyway...

Not how big or worn my Bible is?

No.

How are they going to know that I am a disciple of Jesus? By my love, one for another.

Here's the thing. Don't think for a second that Satan doesn't know this verse better than you, by the way, and better than me, too.

So he knows that if the litmus test by which they will know that we are disciples of Jesus is by our love, one for another, then wouldn't it stand to reason that the enemy would want us, instead of loving one another, to be slandering one another?

Hmm... I wonder, I wonder if that's why every time I invite them to church, they kindly decline the invitation.

And by the way, it's not because of who your pastor is either. So that's not on me.

[Laughter]

I'm not going there. I heard about that church. I'll tell you why it is. And by the way, just so I don't come off, I hope I – the Lord knows my heart. I speak from personal experience.

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Listen, I am a Christian first and a pastor second, by the way, and I haven't always been a pastor. They're saying, look, I'm looking at your life. I see how you act; I see what you do, and in our day, I see what you post, and quite frankly, I'm not interested.

Because see, there's two questions that I wanted answered, and you did not answer them correctly for me.

The first question that I wanted answered was: Are you the real deal? What's the number one thing that people say when you talk about the church, invite someone to church, you talk about Christians?

Oh, the church is full of hypocrites!

To which I'll just say, Hey, we can always use one more. Come on in!

[Laughter]

I say that kind of humorously. But you know what? They're right.

You know what they're really asking, right? They're really asking: I want to know if it's real or are you another one of those Christians whose walk does not match their talk? Because every Christian I've ever known has been like that. I mean, I want you to be the real deal. I want it to be real. That's the first question.

What's the second question? Does it work? They're looking at our lives, reading the letter of our lives as living epistles and they're going, Wow, that's— ?

Listen, I got enough problems of my own. If that's what – If it's not working for you, then no, thank you.

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And make no mistake about it, they want you to be the real deal. They want me to be the real deal. They want it to work.

Because if I'm the real deal, then they can be the real deal. And if it works for me, it can work for them, and they need it to work for them. In fact, they desperately need it to work and be real because that's their only hope. And it all comes down to this one word, "love."

The Apostle Paul, I mean, he's writing to the Corinthians, rebuking the Corinthians. We affectionately refer to *1 Corinthians 13* as the love chapter, right? And we, you know, weddings, you know, love is, love is...

Do you realize that that chapter was actually a rebuke to the Corinthians church who thought they were all that. Oh, we're such a loving church. We welcome everybody. We don't judge anybody. Come as you are. Do what you will. Just fill the seats.

And they were boasting about being so loving that they were tolerating an open, sexual, immoral relationship within the church. Oh, we just hey, we just love on everybody.

And Paul says, That ain't love. You think that's what love is? No, that's not what love is. This is what love is. And then he lists all of the things, which basically you can take the name of Jesus, the only name given among men whereby we must be saved, and you can put it in front – don't put your own name there. You won't get very far. I don't get past the first one. Neither do you, so don't be all spiritual on me.

You can put Jesus in front of every single one of those. And that's the model; that's where the bar is. And by the way, that's the source too.

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And I don't know if you caught it in verse 34 or not, but Jesus said, you're going to be able to love them. How? Because of the love I have for you. That's the source. See, I can't love you unless I love you with the love that Jesus has for me. And Jesus loves me. He likes me too.

Sad day we live in when the word "like" packs more punch than the word "love," yeah? So maybe what was happening then, which is why the Holy Spirit inspired James to write this, is that there was a whole lot of slandering going on and there was also a whole lot of judging going on, verse 12.

And our second question: Do I judge my neighbor?

Doubtless you've heard or even yourself said, Don't judge me! You're not the judge of me! Which is actually based on verses such as this one here in James. However, what James is saying here is that when I judge my neighbor, I'm actually usurping God and judging the motive of the heart.

Now, let me hasten to say that this in no way means we don't have good judgment, sound judgment, and discernment concerning one's fruit outwardly, key word "outwardly."

See, we see the outward appearance and we make judgments based on the outward appearance. The problem is when we start judging the inward, the heart. Only God sees the heart. Only God can judge the heart. Only God can judge the motive of the heart.

And here we are judging the motive of one's heart. How do you know? You can't – listen. You all look marvelous outwardly because that's all we see, right? Don't look at the person sitting next to you either right now, okay?

But the Lord doesn't see that. The Lord sees what's in here. (Pointing towards his heart) Man looks at the outward appearance.

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This is when Samuel was just, I mean, stunned and he couldn't, for the life of him, fathom how it is that Eliab was not the one who would succeed Saul as the king of Israel. In fact, eight sons of Jesse, and it's none of the seven that were there. The one that was going to be anointed wasn't even there.

Where was he?

Oh, tending the sheep. Perfect.

Where is he?

Oh, I didn't think he was... Get him here! Don't even sit down. Nobody drink out of their hydro flask.

[Laughter]

I'm just trying to make it real, until you get him here now. So they go and they get him. Many believe he was, you know, in his teens. Here he comes. Ruddy, handsome, good-looking kid. Kid. Smelled like sheep. All buss up, mess up.

Comes up; Samuel goes, It's him! And he inquires of the Lord, and the Lord's like, Samuel, here's a thing, you judge by the outward appearance, man looks at the outward appearance, but I see the heart. And this kid has a heart after My own heart. That's who's going to be anointed king.

See, we make judgments based on the outward appearance and we, listen, we have to be honest with ourselves, right?

We judge outwardly based on the cars people drive, the clothes people wear. Come on. We judge outwardly. We have no idea what's in the heart; only God does.

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And how arrogant is that to usurp God as judge and position yourself as the judge of one's heart? You cannot.

Outwardly, don't throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. By the way, you got to wonder how they came up with sayings like that. Does somebody actually do that? That's terrible.

Matthew 7:15; I digress, you'll excuse me. Again, Jesus speaking, beginning in *verse 15*, *Matthew 7*. **"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."**

Well, how are we going to know inwardly because we only see outwardly? Oh, good, I'm so glad you asked. I'm going to answer the question right now.

Verse 16, **"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."**

Here's how I see it and say it: You want to know what's at the root that you can't see? Look at the fruit that you can see.

You walk up to a tree – When we first moved here, man, it was amazing. I'm still just, you know, so appreciative. I know sometimes we take the beauty of these islands for granted, but, I mean, you look at these trees and the fruits on those trees.

Can you imagine if you walked up to a mango tree and there was an apple hanging off of that thing?

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Something ain't right here. Listen, no, you know.

Well, how do you know it's a mango tree?

Look at the fruit, duh. I know what I can see is a mango on that tree. So that tells me that at the root where I can't see, it's good.

Outwardly, I can have judgment, but inwardly, I cannot see the heart. It's out of the heart.

Out of the mouth is what is in the heart; it's what comes out. It's not what goes in that defiles. I would be done if that were the case. If it was with the... Never mind. If what I put in my mouth defiled me, I would be long gone.

No, it's what, it's what comes out – I'm glad three people got that. It's what comes out of the mouth that reveals what's in the heart. The fruit will tell you what's at the root. That's what Jesus is saying.

The Apostle Paul, again, *1 Corinthians, Chapter 2:15* echoes this and says this, "**But he who is spiritual judges all things.**"

Again, judgment, discernment, spiritual discernment, outwardly judge all things, test all things. "**Yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.**"

Save one. Only God can judge the heart of man, because only God sees the heart of man.

Listen, how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ is predicated upon the judgments and the assessments that we've made about them outwardly. We've assumed things.

And this, by the way, is the fuel in the tank of slander, I might add. When we cut others down, have we not postured ourselves as their judge? We're judge, jury, and... We've

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already passed judgment on them. We've already made assessments about them, and we delivered our verdict: They're guilty as charged.

Really? Wait a minute. What if they're not?

You know, we're so quick; this is why James talks about the tongue. Aren't you glad we're past that chapter? Do we need to go back and do that? I don't want to. We can assassinate the character of an individual with that tongue. And here's what that looks like, and sounds like and is like, sadly. It's s-so s-subtle, If I could s-say it like that.

All it takes is something like this: You go up to somebody and you say, Oh, hey, we need to pray for so-and-so.

What happened?

Oh, you didn't hear?

No, what?

You'll never look at them the same again.

Why?

Because they're guilty until proven innocent.

Oh, come on.

No, everyone's innocent until proven guilty. (Said sarcastically) Give me a break. Oh, how I wish that were the case.

No, all it takes is just even a hint. Did you hear about... they're having marriage problems?

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You know, and then you show up at church with your Christian smile on your face, and then here comes that couple

(Gasp! Staring all suspicious.)

Just like that, too. I heard they had marriage problems.

(Whisper sounds)

True story – It's okay, right, Lord?

This happened on the mainland, my first church plant. There was this rumor that my wife and I were having problems. The pastor and the pastor's wife were having marital problems. Now, this year, by the way, we've been married for 34 years.

Yeah, oh, thank you.

[Applause]

Yeah. Actually, thank God because it's not me. My wife has major treasures in heaven! I just want you to know that, putting up with me all those years.

But you know what's interesting? Is the guy who started that and was slandering and spreading that false accusation ended up himself divorcing his wife. Let that sink in.

And oh, by the way, just so you know, my wife and I, we weren't having marriage problems.

But that didn't matter because everyone he told that to believed it and left the church. I don't want to go to a church when I mean, I got problems of my own and the pastor's got marriage problems and he's teaching on marriage this week? Are you kidding me?

I hope you're getting the point here. Do not slander your brother, your sister in Christ. Do not gossip. Is it as astonishing to you as it is to me that throughout the epistles the Apostle

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Paul will grocery list all of these abhorrent, I mean, abominations like murder and sexual immorality and all of these horrible things, and in the list is gossiping?

Wait, what? Gossiping rises to the level of being included in a list with things like murder?

Yes. It's that serious? You better believe it. Jesus, *Matthew's Gospel Chapter 5*. You know it.

Talk about raising the bar.

"You've heard it said, 'Thou shalt not murder.' But if you hate your brother in your heart, you slander your sister, you murder them."

You're committing murder. Just like looking with lust, you're committing adultery in your heart. It's a matter of the heart.

What's in your heart?

I'll tell you what's in your heart: Whatever comes out of your mouth, that's what's in your heart.

I love the illustration. I'm going to use it again. I haven't used it for a while. I've been gone for a while, so I can use it again.

You have this bucket, right? And it's full, and whatever it's full of is coming out when you're hit.

Is your bucket full of anger?

I know how to find out. Somebody needs to cut you off in traffic, and if anger comes out, that's what's in your bucket. I better speak for myself on that one. I've confessed it, all right?

The Lord; I've repented, the Lord's doing the work in my heart. Traffic's an issue with me.

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But what if, when you're bumped, instead of your bucket being full of anger, it's full of love.

Because what comes out is whatever you're – this is going to sound horrible, but it's whatever you're full of. I'm going to leave it right there and move on.

Last question, *verses 13-17*: Do I boast about tomorrow?

Now, I have to confess that I struggled somewhat with this well-known passage concerning Christians who are boastful in their arrogance about their life. Tomorrow, we're going to go into such-and-such a city and do business there and make a profit there.

And James, by the Holy Spirit says, you can't say that. I mean, you can say that, but you don't know that because your life – tomorrow's not guaranteed.

You're boasting about tomorrow?

It's not guaranteed. Everything you say, every plan you have, must be prefaced with "Lord willing."

So I know that's what this verse is commonly known as. But when I was seeking the Lord, it really struck me that this really has to do with Christians who don't bring God into the equation. Stay with me.

So here's the pride and the arrogance that – because after all, we've already positioned and postured ourselves as God and judge ourselves. So it would stand to reason that this would ensue.

So God's not in that picture, if I can say I like that. Yeah, tomorrow we're going to do this, I'm going to do that, I've got plans for this.

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Again, nothing wrong with having plans; don't let those plans have you. Have plans but hold loosely to them.

I have long-term plans. I don't plan on those long-term plans happening. Yeah, I hope, Lord willing. (Chuckle) Because yeah, I want that trumpet to sound.

And then you know what happens with all those plans?

Same thing that happens with all those problems; they're gone. I have no problem in my life that the rapture won't solve.

Okay, there, I feel a lot better now. I hope you do too.

But no, that's what this is. This is saying, God, I've already usurped You, removed You from Your rightful position, seated as judge, as God on the throne of my life. I'm calling the shots. This is what's going to happen.

No. In the garden, Jesus pleading, perspiring His own blood with the unspeakable stress of that moment. Taking upon Himself the sin of all mankind, and He's weeping and perspiring His own blood, and He asks the Father, Is it possible that there's another way? Father, can this cup pass from Me? He's asking the Father.

And then He says, nevertheless, that's My will, but not My will be done, Your will be done.

Oh, we do err greatly when we don't submit ourselves to the will of God. And in our stubbornness, in our arrogance, in our obstinance we insist on our own will, our own way. It's all pride.

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And God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. And isn't it the humble who say, Lord, I mean, this is what I want, but I want what You want. I humble myself and I submit myself to You.

Your will be done, Lord, because I know that You know what's best for me. I don't know what's best for me. You do because You know the end from the beginning.

You know, sometimes I think in my own prayer life, when I ask God for something, I can almost imagine God in heaven saying, you don't want Me to answer that prayer, not that way. It would be disastrous.

You can pray it, but you better end it with, nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done, Lord. You know, when we pray, when we seek the Lord and ask – because truth be made known, we worry about the future, right?

We worry about tomorrow. That's *Matthew 6*, by the way. For those of you fellow worry-a-holics, you know who you are, I'm not going to even look up right now, *Matthew 6:19-34* is the cure for worry.

So is *Philippians, Chapter 4:6-8*, among others. But you know it well, it's verse 33. **"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all of these things that you're asking Me for, they will be added unto you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow."**

Certainly don't boast about tomorrow, but don't worry about it either.

"For sufficient unto the day are the worries thereof."

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Now, I wish He didn't say it like that because of what He just got done saying was tomorrow's worries will be there. I was okay until you said that because now I'm thinking about tomorrow's worries. You just got done saying, sufficient are the worries for tomorrow.

Tomorrow's worries will be there when you wake up tomorrow. But don't worry about it today.

How can I not worry about it today? You just told me it's gonna...

How about this one?

This, I heard this; it stuck with me. It has helped me; I hope it's a help to you if you're a worrier.

Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday.

I'm going to let you just kind of process that one.

Today is the tomorrow that you were so worried about yesterday.

You know that they have found – whoever "they" are. I'd like to meet "they" someday, you know. Sometime they're going to come up and introduce themselves and say, My name is They. You are? No way! You're "they?"

Anyway, okay... They say that 95% of everything we worry about never happens.

Now some of you are going, that doesn't help me at all, because that's only 95%. What about the other five?

[Laughter]

I know because I'm you, and you're me. I have a Ph.D. in this.

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[Laughter]

Okay, great. Praise the Lord! 95% of what I don't worry about or what I worry about doesn't happen.

What about the other five?

Oh, the other five? It's never as bad as you in your mind imagined it to be. And sufficient was God's grace when it happened.

In fact, I'll even take it a step further. And I'm speaking from personal experience that that 5%, those things, when they did happen, you're like, Oh!!

And then you see the hand of God, the work of God, the love of God, the plan of God, you're going, oh, cool! Oh, God, this is good!

What? I told you. Why can't you just trust Me? I'm going to work it out.

Our problem is we want God to work it out the way we want God to work it out. And God says, I'm not going to do it that way. How about that? Because your ways are not My ways and My ways are not your ways, and My ways are too high for your understanding.

How is it that this comes so easily for us, removing God from the equation, placing ourselves in that position? How is it that pride just comes so easy? I mean, it's just like magnet to steel. It's just (Clap) it's so, it's the default, it's the sin nature.

And the only way to overcome it is by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us. Because you know what the fruit, not gifts, fruit of the Holy Spirit is, right?

Love, Joy, Peace, Gentleness, Meekness. P-Patience. (Saying it with difficulty) Can I get a witness on that one? And Self-control.

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Meekness? So how does humility come?

Humility comes by way of the Holy Spirit. You can't feign humility. You can try; people see right through it. You know, and when you try, again, I'm speaking from personal experience, so I'll take one for the team here, okay?

When I try to feign humility, I'm proud of my humility and I'm very humble about my pride too.

It doesn't work. It has to come from the Holy Spirit. The only way for a Christian to be humble is to have the Holy Spirit indwelling them and enabling them and empowering them to do so.

Have you ever heard the expression that the New Testament Book of James is likened to the Old Testament Book of Proverbs? Well, there's a reason for that, and *Proverbs 27:1* is one of those reasons. It says, "**Do not boast about tomorrow, [You want to know why?] for you do not know what a day may bring forth.**"

I want to close with *Ecclesiastes 7:14*. God has used this verse in my life over the years in a powerful way. It's really been quite a game-changer, quite a life-changer, if I can say it like that. Solomon writes this: He says, "**In times of prosperity, be joyful.**"

Let's enjoy, hey, things are going good. Praise the Lord while it lasts. It doesn't say that but be joyful, don't apologize. God's blessing you, prospering you, enjoy it. Be joyful, praise the Lord for it.

"But [Uh-oh] in times of adversity consider this:"

Some of your translations render it, "**When adversity strikes.**"

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Notice I didn't quote that translation because I don't like that. Because it says when, not if, by chance. You know, by some chance adversity should happen to...

No, when, when adversity strikes. "**Consider this:**"

Consider what?

Consider that "**God has made one as well as the other.**"

Again, some of your translations render it, "**God brings the prosperity alongside with the adversity.**"

God allows both. God allows the prosperity. God allows the adversity.

Okay, why does He do that?

Answer: "**So that no one can discover what the future holds.**"

See, here's how this works. And I know when I say this, you're going to get this because you live this, I live this. When things are going good, we kind of get into this rhythm, this cadence, this notion that, Hey, it's always going to be good. Tomorrow's going to be good. Hey, I think I'll go into such-and-such a city and do business there and make money there, things are going so good.

God says, Oh, really? Well, you know the future? Wow, I thought I only did that. Oh, you're omnipotent now, and you're omniscient now, you're omnipresent now. I guess you don't need Me. I'll just - let Me know when you're done.

No, He brings the adversity alongside the prosperity because He alone knows what tomorrow holds. I know it's cliché, but it's so true. We don't know the future or what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

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So wouldn't it make sense then to go to the one who does know when we don't know and say to the one who does know who is all-knowing: Lord, only You know tomorrow. So I'm going to ask You for this, but in the end, it's Your call because You're God. I'm not.

The two universal truths in all of history, human history. You ready for it?

Truth number one: There is a God.

Okay, we good? All right.

Truth number two: You're not God.

Okay, are we still good?

Only God knows. We don't know. Our lives - whew - but a mist, a vapor. Tomorrow's never guaranteed. Let's be careful. Let's be careful. Let's be prayerful. Let's be humble.

And please, and I should probably – this is as good of a time as any, lastly, to thank you as a church because this is a loving church. This is a loving church. If somebody comes in and they're gossiping and back-biting, they don't last very long, because this is a loving church.

This church is the real deal. I love hearing it when we have visitors come from the mainland and I have the privilege of talking with them and them with me. And they say to me, man, this is a loving church.

I'm like, (nodding yes). This is where I get proud of my humility.

I'm like, I know.

No, it's not that bad. Is there a lightning bolt coming back anywhere? No, but here's what I say. If I wasn't the pastor of this church, this is where I would go to church. And I mean that, by the way, and the Lord knows my heart when I say that.

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This is a loving church, and I want to thank you for loving one another because that's how the world is going to know that we're truly disciples of Jesus. Thank you for that. Thank you for being a loving church.

Please be careful, though. Don't think for a second the enemy doesn't want to come in and start that division from within. He cannot destroy the church from without. It has to be from within, division from within. Slander. Gossip. Rumors. False accusations. Assassinating of one's character. Judging by the outward appearance. Boasting, positioning yourself in the place of God. Only God can do that; let Him.

Why don't you stand, we'll close in prayer. Kaponu, come up.

Father in heaven, I thank You so much. Lord, You knew even before my wife and I came here, that this church would be here, that these people would be here, these brothers and sisters.

Lord, I thank You. I know it's a strong text, but there's a needed strength here. And maybe for us and thankfully for us, maybe it's preemptive, it's preventative.

But Lord, keep us from this. May it never be numbered among us, may it never be said of us, My, how they backbite and gossip about one another. Instead, Lord, may it be said of us, My, how they love one another. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.