



Message **Transcript** Checklist For Christâ€™s Coming

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Pastor Jeff:

Our father, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we thank you as a people that you are still on your throne, that you are ruling and reigning. We love you. We celebrate you. Lord, we love to be in a place, your church where we can come together and sing praises to your name, to thank you for the gospel of Jesus Christ, to seek you in prayer and to hear you through your living and active word. So Lord, our prayer this morning is that you would speak because Lord, we believe every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that is exactly what you do. So Lord, be helpful to me and be helpful to us as we receive your word this morning. And so now for everyone who has gathered, who desires to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he says and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word Amen. Amen.

The first advent of Jesus Christ is the greatest season that ever took place on this planet. The triune God, the Holy Spirit, father, son, and Holy Spirit that makes up the Trinity had a plan in mind. And the second person of the Trinity, the eternal son, was dispatched from heaven, was born of a virgin, became a man, and fully as God-man fulfilled the law, died on a cross, satisfied the wrath of God for all of our sins, died, was buried rose from the grave, and when he did through repentance and faith offered life to anyone who had come to him. And anyone who came to him, he would not turn away. And here in the month of December, 2023, as we look forward to celebrating Christmas, we remember his first advent. We're thanking God for sending

his son Jesus to be the Savior of the world. That's why we spend time on Christmas celebrating Christ. That's his first advent.

We live in between his first advent and his second advent. Advent means coming. His second advent is going to come. The Bible tells us it's going to happen soon. The Bible tells us that his coming is near. We don't know exactly when that's going to be, but until he gets here, we're living in that interim space that Christ has come, that Christ is coming back but here we are now. And we've been in this series called Walk Your Talk. As we've been studying the book of James, the half-brother of Jesus inspired by the Holy Spirit has told us that as believers in Christ, there are ways that we're to walk out the faith that we say that we have. He's taught us how to walk out our faith through trials, through temptations, through receiving the word, through not showing favoritism, through being doers of the word and not hearers of the word. Through our tongue and the way we speak. Through wisdom, through rejection of materialism and on and on.

These are all the things that we're called to do and yet we need to do them in light of the fact that Christ is coming again. He is coming again. It should be our motivation for how we should live. And usually when we talk about Christ's second coming, it's usually extremes that we talk about. There's a group of people that say, "Yeah, I don't care about any of that stuff because everybody talks about it. He's always going to come and he never comes and I'm not really not interested." I'm here to tell you he's coming and you should live your entire life in light of the fact that he's coming. And then there's another extreme, which is he coming any minute, he coming

any minute, don't get married, don't have kids, don't do it. He's coming. And they kind of go out to the mountain on robes. It's fanatical. That's not what he tells us to do in the scriptures. There's ways that God wants us to live until he gets here that is so important.

And really what is happening in the book of James in this section we're going to look at this morning is him telling us what a checklist for Christ's coming looks like. In light of his second coming how should we be living now? And I want to highlight five truths that God tells us this morning in case you want to know, how should I be living until Jesus gets here? And to do that this morning we're going to be in James chapter five starting in verse seven and going through verse 12. So I'd love to read those verses to you this morning and then let's unpack these verses together. He says, "Therefore be patient brethren until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil being patient about it until he gets the early and late rains. You too be patient. Strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain brethren against one another so that you yourselves might not be judged. Behold, the judge is standing right at the door.

As an example, brethren of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. But above all my brethren do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no no so that you may not fall under judgment." Here in these short verses, we really get a

picture of a checklist for Christ coming, a checklist for Christ coming. What should I be doing? Blessed is the one whose Lord finds him doing what he or she should be doing when he arrives. And really through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, James is showing us here's five truths that you need to check the box on. Here's how you should be living until Jesus Christ comes. And if you get these right, it's really going to culminate everything that we've been talking about in this book.

And the first is this, until Christ comes endure difficulties patiently. Until Christ comes, endure difficulties patiently. Notice what he says, "Therefore be patient." There's that word patient. It doesn't just mean when you're waiting in line or waiting in traffic. Patient means long suffering. Patience means you are going to have difficulties. You are going to have trials, you are going to have challenges endure them. And by the way, enduring them means it's going to take a little time to get through them. However long your trial is or temptation you're going through, probably going to take a little longer to get through it than what you thought it was going to be. And isn't it interesting that when we go through trials and temptations, here's how we pray, get me out of this. Get me out of this and get me out of it now.

But if we understand the sovereignty of God, he's the one who's authoring it. He's the one who's bringing it in. He's the one who's doing something in you because what he's building in you isn't quite done yet. So be patient. Be patient. Endure difficulties patiently. Therefore be patient brethren, that means brothers be patient, sisters, be patient until when? The coming of the Lord. Well, when do I get to stop being patient? When you meet Jesus face-to-face, stop. It'll all be good. Until that time endure

patiently. And he uses the example of a farmer. He says, "The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it until it gets the early and late rains." I grew up in the Midwest. My grandfather was a farmer. My dad grew up farming. I'm one generation away from being a farmer. I know a ton of farmers. Farmers are some of the greatest people on the planet. They're some of the hardest working people you'll ever meet. They are.

And do you know why? You can't cram for a crop? You can't wake up in August and September and be like, oh, we got to get this thing done. Let's throw some seed. You have to start in the spring. You have to till the soil. You got to do it daily and you have to get up and you got to plant the seeds and you've got to water the seeds and you've got to do all that stuff. You've got to let it sit just right. You've got to pull weeds. And even if you do everything just right, it's still not dependent upon you. It's dependent upon the soil that you didn't produce. And it's dependent upon the rain that you're not sovereign over. It's dependent upon the Lord doing it all. And so he's using the example of a diligent farmer that's willing to do all the right things but is still dependent upon the Lord to bring the harvest.

And he brings the early rains, the rains in the spring when the seed gets put in the ground. And then he brings the late rains when it's really needed, when it's growing up and the farmer's still dependent upon God because even if the farmer does everything right, it doesn't guarantee a great crop. And even if you do everything just right without God's sovereign direction in your life, you won't become what he wants you to become. So he says, "Endure patiently. Remain under the trial patiently." Let

me just tell you this, if you're a believer, difficulties are part of your life on this side of heaven. Challenges are part of your life on this side of heaven. Ambiguities are part of your life on this side of heaven. Uncertainties are part of your life on this side of heaven, and we could go on and on and on and on.

If somebody has told you, "Oh, your life's so bad, trust Jesus and everything will be perfect, they lied to you." That is not the gospel. The gospel is that you're dead in your sin and you need to repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ. That's the gospel. And if you're in Christ, here's the promise, in this world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I've overcome the world. Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Troubles and tribulations are just part of your life as a believer. And so what God wants you to do until he gets here is endure impatiently. Endure, impatiently. Just walk through it. Just because you think you're done with the trial, just because you think that temptation's over doesn't mean it's over. I mean, just think about some of the things, the challenges and the difficulties of trials. The things that you've gone through with trials you would've never picked for yourself. They wouldn't be trials if you would've picked them for yourself.

The reason you get the trials that you get is that's part of God's curriculum for your life. The reason you're tempted by the things that you're tempted are those are temptations for your life and God is sovereign over those and God can use you in those and God can give you victory in those, but he takes you through those to build in you what you need to be. What about ambiguity? I don't see how this is going to work

out. You're never going to see how it's all going to work out. We walk by faith and not by sight. Some people are like, I don't see how this is going to happen. How can you possibly see what's going to happen? You're not God. Only God sees what's going to happen. Even when you think you know what's going to happen, you don't know what's going to happen. Only God knows the future or uncertainty. I'm just uncertain this is going to happen. There's no guarantee. That's right. We walk by faith and not by sight.

Or how about anxiety? How about anxiety? Anxiety happens because we believe that we're sovereign and we can work out all our problems. Anxiety happens because you think you can control the political environment. You think you can control your work environment. You think you can control your neighborhood environment. You think you can control other people so that everything in your life runs smooth. And you can't. And when you can't but you think you can, then you're anxious. It seems to be working for everybody else. No, you're worrying about your life because you think you're in charge when you're not even in charge so just give up, let God run your life. No need to live with anxiety. Or how about wickedness? Wickedness. The closer you walk with the Lord, the more wicked you'll realize that this world is and that it's going to go from bad to worse. And there's blips in the radar. There's God's goodness and his mercy when people repent and when groups of people repent and God relents and he's merciful and he's compassionate, and we read that in the text today.

But in general, there's a wickedness that happens in our world. And if we're focused on challenges, difficulties, ambiguity, uncertainty, wickedness and all this, and we're not realizing that God's sovereign behind all of it, we're going to be the ones that

think we can change it all. I got news for you. You can't, only God can. And he's using all these things in your life because when he saves you, you belong to him for eternity. But he is preparing you for when you meet him face to face and we're thanking him for what he's bringing in our life like the farmer thanks him for the rain. And we're thanking him for what he's bringing later in our life. Just like the farmer thanks him for the rain, but there are things we wouldn't have asked for. We would never ask God for the trials we go through and here's what we falsely think as a young believer, once we make it through a trial, we did it. I don't ever need to go through another one of these.

I told my non-Christian friends, I'm not going to party with them. I did it. I'm sure it'll never get more difficult than that. It will. I mean, wherever you are on your journey, there'll be something even more difficult to step into with Christ. And every time you do, you will feel more and more alone where all you have is the Lord and that's a good thing. That's a good thing. So as you go through trials, as you go through temptations, as you go through struggles, challenges, difficulties, ambiguities, uncertainties and all those things are a part of your life as a Christian, just go through them, endure. Do you know why? Because every single Christian you'll meet from every tribe, tongue and nation that has named the Lord Jesus Christ has a story just like that. Can I tell you who you won't meet in heaven? You won't meet anybody in heaven that tells you this, "I didn't really have any problems on earth. I loved it. I was so blessed. As a matter of fact, now that I'm in heaven, I kind of miss it. It was so blessed."

I mean you won't meet those people in heaven. They're not there. The people that you'll meet in heaven have a testimony of challenge, difficulty, uncertainty,

ambiguity. Just to help some other brothers and sisters out in Christ if I'm telling the truth and you have some challenges in your life, could you just raise your hand so they can see that they're not alone? You know what I'm talking about? I mean, I see you Westy. I see you Colorado Springs, you're raising your hand too. We're all in this together. And we're going to endure difficulties patiently. It kind of reminds me of the marine commercial where you see all the storm coming in and everybody's running away from the storm and then there's the few, the proud and what are they doing? They're going into the storm. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, we're running into the storm. We're making disciples in the storm. We're going into the world that's departed from God and saying, "You need to repent and believe this gospel. There's good news coming your way if you'll turn to the living Savior."

And why does God take us through all this? Because he's growing our character. When you squeeze a piece of fruit, you see the juice that comes out. When a Christian gets squeezed, when they're going through a trial, you really see what's on the inside. You really see what they're made of and what God's trying to produce in your life is goodness and righteousness and truth. And when you see a believer go through a trial, they endured a little bit differently than a non-believer does. They don't like the trial, but they can thank God in the trial. And you see just a faithfulness and endurance that is not only strong for them, but it builds your faith and that's what he tells you to do. So until Christ gets back, checklist number one, endure difficulties patiently.

Number two is this, until Christ comes, strengthen yourself in the Lord. Strengthen yourself in the Lord. How am I going to endure these trials? Patient. How

am I going to make it through? How am I going to remain? You're going to strengthen yourself in the Lord. Be strong in the Lord and then the strength of his might, Ephesians tells us. Notice what he says in verse eight. "You too, just like the farmer was patient, you too be patient. Strengthen your hearts. Why? For the coming of the Lord is near." The coming of the Lord is near. He's coming soon. The coming of the Lord is near. The more I look at the world, the more I'm convinced he's coming soon. But even if he doesn't come in my lifetime, even if he doesn't come in my children's lifetime, what difference does it make?

Well, I should be living the way he wants me to live so that when I meet him face to face, I can hear well done good and faithful servant. You've been doing the things I've asked you to do. You've been living the way I've asked you to live. You've been enduring the trials I've sent your way. You've been overcoming the temptations. You've been good with your tongue. You've been good with wisdom. You are growing. You're not perfect, but I see you making steps of faith to become more and more like me. You too be strong in the Lord. Strengthen yourself in the Lord. Well what's that mean? It means make Jesus Christ a priority in your life. The only way you're going to be able to endure in this life is if Jesus is a priority.

Now, notice what I didn't say. Get up tomorrow at five in the morning, have a Bible study. Some of you'll be like, there ain't no way I'm getting up at five in the morning tomorrow morning and having a Bible... You don't have to get up at five in the morning. Make Jesus a priority in your day. Seek him, seek him. Seek him in prayer.

Seek him in his word. Worship him. Sing to him. You say, "I'm not really good at all that stuff." Be part of a life-giving church like this one that preaches the word, that worships the Lord, that seeks him on a first Tuesday. That puts people in community called cadres where you can live obedient to the Lord, where you can sharpen one another and challenge one another become brave warriors. That sends people on mission to do prayer care and share throughout the week where you're on mission for the Lord, living out among the loss what God requires of you. That's just a great place to start. But make Jesus the priority. Because when you're going through difficulty, it's too late to start strengthening yourself in the Lord.

When trial or tragedy hits, it's too late to say, "I should probably start praying right now." No, you should have been doing that all along so that you were ready to endure the trial that was coming, the difficulty that was there, the ambiguity that you didn't expect. Strengthen yourself in the Lord. Do whatever it takes to do to strengthen yourself in the Lord. And I'm going to give you permission to do that with the personality that the Lord gave you. For some of you that are super disciplined, you like to get up at the exact same time and do the exact same thing. Set a place. Say it's in this chair at this time, here's what I'm going to read. It's systematic. Do that. Others of you a little more artistic, like I don't like to do anything on time. I just like to still make God a priority. Maybe you like to walk around, maybe you like to sing, maybe you like to hear the word spoken over. However you're going to grow in the Lord. Let the Lord be the priority of your life. Strengthen yourself in him.

Tell him what you need from him. Tell him I'm not so great at this. Tell him I need

you to bring other people around me that can help me grow in this. Lord, I need you. I want to be strong in you and then make decisions to let the Lord be the Lord of your life. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says in Colossians chapter two verse six, "Therefore as you have received Christ, Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude." Same way you received Christ, grow in Christ. Same way you repented and trusted in Christ, grow in Christ. No matter where you are in Christ, there's more room to go. There's more depths to plumb. There's more strength that you can have. Until Christ comes if you're going to endure difficulties patiently, you're also going to need to strengthen yourself in the Lord. Strengthen yourself in the Lord.

I'm just telling you, the longer I walk with the Lord, the less impressed I am with non-church folk that call themselves Christian. The less impressed I am with those who are like, "I can come and do church on my own." The less impressed I am with people who think they can do it without the body of Christ. I'm not that impressed because. I've never met anybody that strong that does it that way. I mean, there's something about saying I'm going to be part of a life-giving community called the church because Jesus Christ established the church and I want to be a part where the word is heralded and I'm going to be a part of a community where God is worshiped and I want to be a part of a community where God is prayed to and sought after. I want to be a part of a community that sets us on mission and I want to be part of that community that challenges and admonishes me and loves me and encourages me.

I want that because I find people that prioritize that, grow more mature in the Lord than people that stay outside of that and think they're better than that. Until Christ comes endure difficulties patiently, strengthen yourself in the Lord. Do this, number three, refrain from complaining. Do we need to talk about it? Until Christ comes refrain from complaining. Here's what he says, "Do not complain." Now in the original language the Bible was written in which was Greek, you know what that means? Do not complain. That's what it means. Do not complain brethren, do not complain brothers, don't complain sisters against one another so that you yourselves may not be judged. Behold the judge is standing right at the door. Listen, when difficulties and challenges come, when you are going through something that not everybody else has to go through and nobody else seems to understand the challenge or severity of the trial or temptation that you're under and you're trying to strengthen yourself in the Lord and nobody else understands it, guess what you begin to do? Complain, talk, whine, criticize, blame. That's what tends to happen in our flesh. Refrain from complaining.

So the Bible says, "Don't judge lest you be judged." Now the Bible tells us that in the church we're called to judge one another. If somebody's living immoral, I can make a judgment call objectively that this is God's standard and you're not living by that standard. As parents, we are called to judge our children's behavior like this is how God wants you to live and you're not living. That kind of judging is okay, this is not that kind of judging. This is the kind of judging that says, I'm frustrated. I'm in this lot in life, and how come you're not understanding me? And how come you're in that position? How come they're in that? I don't get all this stuff. And here's what happens. You have

to realize God's sovereign, God's the one who is authoring what's going on in your life. God's behind it all. And God's the one who puts leadership in place. God is the one, children, he picked your parents for you. He picked the teachers that you have. Pastors are put in place by God. Politicians are put in place by God. God's sovereign overall leadership.

When you start complaining about people in leadership and you start complaining and whining about this and you're slandering and you're gossiping and you're maligning one another, you're saying, God, what you're doing in this world is wrong. And I know what you're saying. I don't slander. I don't gossip. I don't do any of that stuff. I mean, I'm a very safe person. A lot of people feel comfortable coming to me and telling me those things. Well, that's because you're a gossip and a slanderer too. Because you don't have ears for that because God's the one that does what he does. Well, my pastor, I mean he's this, he's that. Your pastor knows that he's not perfect. Your pastor knows that he doesn't make perfect decisions. Your pastor knows that he doesn't get it right every time. Your pastor knows that only Jesus does. You don't need to complain about him. It doesn't help him. You don't need to complain about other people in the church.

The Bible says judgment begins at the household of God. How is it we can take the gospel out if we're always judging each other in the church, if we're always complaining about other people. When you're going through think, well, I can't. Believe they drive that and I can't believe she dresses like that and I can't believe they do that. I can't believe. That's judging. Zip the lip. That's what he's saying. When you're going

through your stuff, just shh, quit talking about it. Yes, it's okay to have a couple of good friends and you can share and vent with them and that's okay. God gives us the body of Christ to exhort one another. Hey, are you hearing anything in me that needs... That's good. But go to Jesus first. Pour out your heart to him. Share with him. Let him know how you feel. Lord, I'm rejoicing in you in the middle of this, but boy, I'm crying my eyes out because this is hard and I don't get it. And you must have some good. Is there something you want to reveal to me?

Go to God, but don't gossip and malign other people. Church, let me just say this. Don't complain about pastors of other churches either. Don't complain about other churches and don't whine about other churches. We can talk about specifics like, hey, they don't believe in the doctrine of the atonement and they're wrong. We can talk about that, but let's not malign people. Let's not go after individuals with ad hominem attacks and blaming others and criticizing others. How about politics? Man, next year's an election year, you'd have to be blind to not know that. Everybody's all up in arms about politics and we should do our part and we should vote. And some of you here are running for office and praise God for you and let's get as many people that are living for the Lord. And I'm great with that. But at the end of the day, let's make no mistake about it, that when somebody is positioned in office, elected or unelected fairly unfairly, whatever you want to call it, God's the one who put them there. It's God's job.

And even if you look at our nation, I mean Joe Biden being in the White House, God's judgment on our nation. Without question. Without question. But I'm not complaining to God about that. I'm going to vote my conscience. I'm going to do what

God's asked me to do. But I think God's saying, "Hey, if you think that this world's going to change because of who you vote for, but you're not going to be serious about me and you're going to grumble and complain about each other and you're not going to put me on display and you're not going to put my gospel out there and you're not going to advance the kingdom, fine. I'll give you what you want." And I'm tired of it. Politics doesn't change the world. It's downstream from what the church is doing. God's calling us to live different until he comes. That's what he wants. That's what he wants. Don't complain, don't whine. Let me give you three words that you need to check your own heart for three words. You can't have any of these growing in your heart. No bitterness, no hurt, no resentment.

Bitterness is that person's name comes up, I'm not good with them. That's bitterness. Hurt is they hurt me and there's still a sting from the hurt and resentment is can't stand them, kind of the gritting the teeth that don't want to be around them. Now, I'm not saying that other people can't hurt you. I'm not saying that other people haven't hurt you. I'm not even saying people haven't wronged you severely, but God knows that they have. But you're a Christian and the centrality of the gospel is that God in Christ forgave you for your sin, which is greater than by a massive chasm than any sin that anyone has ever done to you. So who do you think you are to call yourself by the name of Christ when you're claiming his complete forgiveness for everything when you yourself can't forgive another person? Amen?

Forgiveness is huge in this. If you're going to refrain from complaining, sometimes

the reason you complain is that there's unforgiveness that's brewing and it masks itself as bitterness, hurt, or resentment. Listen to the word of the Lord as the Holy Spirit penned through Paul in Ephesians chapter four, starting in verse 29. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, that means building others up according to the need of the moment. So it will give grace to those who hear." So not only what you say is building to the person you're talking to but people around, you are like, man, that was really encouraging, that was building, that was edifying. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. How do you grieve the Holy Spirit? Through unforgiveness, through criticism, through gossip, through slander, you grieve the Holy Spirit. He says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you along with all malice."

And then here's the command. Be kind to one another. Tender hearted, that means I have an open heart towards you, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. So until Christ comes back, he's going to engineer and author circumstances in your life that hurt you, that wounds you, that disappoint you so that you can put the forgiveness of Christ on full display for everybody to watch. Praise the Lord, isn't that great news this morning? We hate that. I hate that. You ever notice that you sometimes pray, Lord, get that person out of my life. Oh sweet, they moved. And then God brings two other people in your life that are just like them and even more difficult. Why? Because you didn't pass the test the first time. You can't escape what God's trying to build in your life. You may as well hunker down and enjoy it. You may

as well put Christ on display in it.

You may as well be a person who forgives generously where you're saying, "Lord, they don't deserve this, but I didn't deserve your grace and because you gave it to me, I'm giving it to them and it's an act of my will and it's so hard. I don't even feel like doing it, but I forgive them and I hand them over to you. "You hold them because as I've said from this pulpit many times, unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. They're not going to die. You're killing yourself. Forgive them. Release them. Let it go. Don't criticize, don't blame, don't argue, don't whine. Don't complain. This is what he says. James doesn't mess around. He doesn't mess around at all. And here's what he says. Why shouldn't we do that so we won't be judged? He said, "Why? Behold, because the judge is standing at the door. Where's Jesus? Oh, he's right here. He's watching it all.

How can you say you love God whom you haven't seen when you can't even love your brother, whom you have seen? Anyone who can't love his brother, whom he has seen but says he loves God is a liar. He's right at the door. It is like the little kids that are fighting only to realize Dad's like standing right there. It was kind of fun for me this week. I was up at first Tuesday with Westminster love being with y'all, and there's some transitions going on. We transitioned Pastor AJ to be the campus pastor there, Pastor Justin, our campus pastor's going to be our campus pastor here and oversee some broader scope of ministry. And it's exciting what the Lord's building and the shepherding elders in Westminster invited me up and I said, "Love to come." And the way that they had me do this is as they were making some announcements and getting

ready to pray and bless what God was doing, they said, "Hey, you just walk on the stage from backstage."

So Kim and I were there. We walked on stage from backstage and I was standing behind everybody. I was like three feet from each other and they started showing pictures of Pastor Justin Hart of his years of ministry up there and what he was doing. He was looking at the screen and I could hear him because I'm only two feet away from him. Like man, I was a lot skinnier when I started. And he goes, "I got a bald spot now." And he leaned over to one of the elders. He is like, "Yeah, I guess the closer you get to Pastor Jeff, the less hair you have." And I was standing right there with my wife. I'm like, I don't think he sees me see it. I'm like right here. And we're friends. It was no big deal. But I was kind of like, "Hey bro, what else you got to say about me?" That's what it's like with Jesus. He's right at the door. He's right at the door.

When you slander somebody, you gossip somebody and they're not there. Jesus is right here watching and he's coming to judge. I mean the first time he came, he came humble. He came meek, he came mild. He came on purpose to die for the sins of the world. Next time he's coming as the holy God in judgment. May we be ready for his coming. May we use our words to build others up. May we use our words to encourage one another. It doesn't mean we have to agree with everything everybody else says. We can speak the truth. We just speak it in love. But don't criticize. Don't complain. Don't whine, don't grumble. I mean if you study the Old Testament, sometimes it is a little bit weary to go through the whole Old Testament. If you're doing

the Bible in a year, when's Israel going to get it? I mean, they're two greatest gifts they seem to have were grumbling and complaining and God hates all that because he's the one that was doing the work in them. He just wanted to submit. He wanted them to submit to him.

And in the middle of all our trials and what he's building in us and the journey he's taken on, he just wants us to submit to him and let us follow him. He's sovereign. He's authoring these things. He's appointing these things. So just think about it. You just take those three things and say, "Hey, until Christ comes, I'm going to endure difficulties with patience. I'm going to remain under that trial. I'm going to cast all my burdens on the Lord because he cares for me. I'm going to put on Jesus' yoke. I'm going to walk with him. He's going to carry it with me because he loves me. I'm going to strengthen myself in the Lord. I'm going to get stronger in him so I can handle more of these challenges that come. I'm going to refrain from complaining. I'm going to bite my tongue at times. I'm going to zip my lip at times. I'm just not going to say what I want to say that would make me feel good."

So then how do you do it? I mean it sounds really good, but it sounds kind of like a bunch of platitudes. That's why I love God's word, he tells us how to do it. He gives us the fourth one. He says, "Until Christ comes, model godly examples." Model godly examples. Follow those who have already done it this way. Notice what he says in verse 10, "As an example brethren of suffering and patient, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord." Hey, has anyone else ever suffered? Has anyone else ever been through a hard time? Am I the only one that has to endure this stuff? Hey,

go back and look at the prophets. Every time they opened their mouth, God sent them on a mission to the people he loved and they were constantly rejected, hated, tortured and killed for doing one thing and one thing only proclaiming the word of the Lord.

Study Jeremiah. They call him the weeping prophet. Do you know why? Because all he did was cry. He would say, "Lord, what is going on? Everybody else is preaching peace, peace, but you keep telling me to preach judgment and they're talking about all their visions and revelations, and you're telling me to preach judgment." And God tells Jeremiah, and I'm paraphrasing, that's because they're not getting the vision from me. That's because they're making up stuff. I'm telling you the truth. Tell them judgment's coming. They hated it. They didn't listen to him. He told Jeremiah, "Don't get married there, don't have kids. Just keep proclaiming my word because my people need to hear it. But guess what? They're not going to listen to you." Isaiah would tell you the same thing. Ezekiel would tell you the same thing. Elijah would tell you the same thing. Man, just study the prophets all the way down to Jesus whose God in flesh. And what do they do with him? They killed him too. Why should you expect it to be any different if you live out and proclaim the word of God in this generation.

Study that. Watch the prophets. Just go back and see. When you meet Jeremiah someday in heaven, Jeremiah, did you suffer? Isaiah, did you suffer at all? Elijah, did you suffer? These guys all felt alone. I mean, even after Elijah calls down fire from heaven and all the prophets of Baal are killed, Jezebel says, "You know what? I'm going to kill him before the end of the day." And he runs away. He's like, "Lord, I'm the

only one here. Nobody else understands." And God says, "No, there's a remnant of 7,000. They haven't bowed their need of Baal. You're not alone. And by the way, you're never alone because I'm with you." This is what he says. You want to know how to endure? Go study the people of the Bible. Did Paul have to endure anything? He was shipped wrecked. He was beaten. He was left for dead. He was stoned. I mean, all of his friends were killed. I mean, people inside the church hated him. They're like, "He's not even a good speaker and he's not really impressive."

And people outside the church wanted to kill him. When he got into town, he knew he was going to go to prison. I mean, it was horrible. He was even saying, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. And that's even better because I can't wait to meet Jesus." Peter would tell you the same thing. I mean all the apostles would tell you the same thing. Everybody suffers. Follow their example. Follow their example. Notice what we say in verse 11, "We count those blessed who endured." We love them. They made it all the way through. It's a blessing to endure all the way to the end. And some of you know saints that you knew on this side of heaven that are no longer with you that endured all the way to the end. That died of cancer were abused or had a super hard life or were paralyzed until they went to meet the Lord or died of ALS or whatever it was, you're like, yeah, but they endured all the way to the end and they're in the presence of Jesus celebrating right now and they're blessed.

And then Job always comes up. We talk about suffering. You ever notice that? Anytime a Christian talks about suffering, oh, it's just like Job. Have you ever read the book of Job or you just say that? We always say Job, but the Bible talks about Job.

You've heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that he is full of compassion and he's merciful. You've heard about Job, right? Here's the guy that's faithfully serving the Lord. He's doing the very things. He's a righteous man. He loves his wife. He loves his family. He's honoring in the marketplace. He's doing it all right? And what's he lose? Well, he loses his home. He loses his children, his wealth, his health, his reputation, even his well-meaning friends kind of blame him for what's going on. And his wife, Mrs. Job, who sees him suffering so much says, "Why don't you curse God and just die?" It's a bad day for Job. It's a bad season for Job.

But listen to the heart of Job because he had been strengthening himself in the Lord long before that happened. I mean, in Job 1:22, it says this about him. First of all, he says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave. And the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. May his reputation be glorious." And it says this, "Through all this job did not sin, nor did he blame God." That's why He's an example. Anybody here lost anything like that to that degree? And in all that, here's what Job says, "You take anything I have, you gave me everything I have. Anything that you take away just belongs to you. Blessed be your name. You're worthy, you're awesome. You're the God of the universe. And in all that, I will not sin." Amen? And in Job chapter 13:15, he says, "Though he slay me, I will hope in him." That's where I'm placing my trust. It doesn't matter what happens to me on this side of heaven, I'm putting my trust in him.

Now here's the problem, can I just be real clear on this? We don't really preach

the gospel in America. We don't preach the gospel. We preach a false gospel. The false gospel looks something like this, hey, you're a sinner. What's that mean? Don't worry about it. It's really bad. But here's the deal. Jesus died on the cross for you and he rose from the dead. And you can still live your same sinful lifestyle, do all the same garbage that you're doing. But if you'll name the name of the Lord, he will save you. What do I have to do? Just pray this prayer. Okay, I'll pray it. Anything else? Well, I'll be good if you got baptized too. Okay, I'll do that. What else? You're in. Great. I'm going to continue to live my same garbage, sinful lifestyle. Praise the Lord. That's not a gospel.

By the way, study any of the apostles, study any of the Old Testament prophets, not one was killed for telling people that they would live their best life now. Not one person was killed by telling people, you're going to be totally healthy. You're going to have all the money you ever want. You'll never have any problems. Nobody kills people like that. Here's why people get killed because they say things like this that I'm about to say. Jesus Christ is the only God of the universe. He is the God man. He came to this world 2000 years ago as fully God and fully man. He's eternally existent as part of the Trinity. He put on flesh. He fulfilled the law. He satisfied the wrath of God. And here's why. Because you're a sinner. And yes, God still has a love for you. And here's how you know because he murdered his son because of your sin.

Now, we say things like this, hate the sin, love the sinner. And there's an element of truth to that. We are to hate sin and we are to love people. But God hates sinners. God doesn't send sin to hell, God sends sinners to hell, the ones who commit the sin.

You're one of them. When you are born, you were dead. If you haven't repented, you're still dead. Jesus Christ is the only way you can ever be made alive. If you go to your grave without repenting and believing that Jesus is the Christ, you will go to hell for all eternity because you've offended an eternal holy God. People go to hell in droves every single day and there's some of you here that are listening to my voice that are offended because you're one of them. And if you don't repent and believe that's where you'll go.

But God in his mercy and God in his compassion is so gracious that even if you are never going to turn to him, provided a way so that you could. That in your sin, if you realize it's that great and you realize you're dying and you realize you need hope, come to Jesus, he will not turn you away. He will be the Lord of your life, and he will secure your future forever and ever, amen. That's the gospel. So here's the question. Have you ever repented and trusted Jesus? Because see, that message gets people killed in every generation. That message offends people in every generation. Do you know why? Because it makes you the problem. And people that start talking about the blessed life and never talk about sin, righteousness, and judgment, it's because they have a figment in their imagination of their own God that they've made up who think falsely, that all God cares about is the here and now and making you blessed.

Friends, you're not going to be blessed until Jesus Christ returns and sets up an eternal kingdom where there is no sin. In this life you will have tribulation. It's part of what God's growing in you. Embrace it patiently. Watch what every single prophet and

apostle went through. Watch what every great saint in church history has done. There's always trial. There's always temptation. There's always difficulty. But if you have the Lord, you can endure through all of it. That's the good news of the gospel. Amen?

Now, I used to think once you get through something, then I'm like, okay, I'm there. I'm there. I mean, Romans 15:4 tells us why God gave us the word and why he gave us all these examples. He says this, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope."

Friends, the hope in this world and the only place you will ever find it is in Jesus. You won't find it anywhere else. Save yourself time. You will not find it no matter who gets elected. You will not find it no matter who's on the school board. You will not find it no matter who your teacher is. You will not find it no matter who your pastors, you can only find it in Jesus. And he gave us examples of people that placed their whole faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We even have examples of people that tried to live it all. I mean, Solomon. I mean, how many wives did he have? How many concubines did he have? How many stupid decisions did he make? And under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he opens up the book of Ecclesiastes saying, "Meaningless, meaningless. Everything's meaningless." If you're going to live this life without God, it's purposeless. It's silliness, it's vanity of vanities. It's completely empty in every way. Don't live a meaningless life. And here's the reality.

If you start walking with the Lord, God will take you through something and you'll think, it'll never get any harder than that. I did it. And then you'll realize you just took

your first baby step of many to come. I find that the longer I walk with the Lord and the more I start living for him, the more challenge I see, the more difficulties come, the greater the step of faith has to be. Do you know every single Saturday at my house something goes wrong? I mean, I don't know what it's going to be, I know there's going to be some tension in our family or in my marriage or with my kids or with me or something go wrong in our house or whatever. It just always happens. Except for yesterday, it didn't happen. We had a great family day yesterday. We hung out. It was great. And I'm like, this is so strange. This is just a good day. Until 8:30.

And then I got a call from my wife who was at the store and the four brand new tires we just bought for her car. Guess what? One had a flat and it's freezing cold. And you know how mechanical I am, so I'm like, that car's going to sit in the parking lot all night, but I'll come get you. And it's still there. And we came and got my... So I go and pick up my wife and my daughters and we're driving home only to find out that when I get home somebody clogged the toilet and I could not find the plunger. And as I was going to bed, I looked at my wife and I'm like, this is so perfect. I said, "Every single Saturday it happens. Something, right?" And that's what I have to look forward to this afternoon when I go back home.

And it's not a big deal, but I'm just telling you, the more you walk with the Lord, the more you'll see these little things just interfere and get in the way. And it's all part of it. Just model and follow godly examples. Just follow godly examples. They're all over the place. There are people in our church that are living this way. There are people in the scriptures that are living this way. There are people in your family that

you know that are living that way. Just follow those godly examples. And then let me give you a final one. It may be the most important. Until Christ comes speak true and sincere words. Until Christ comes speak true and sincere words. He just comes out and says, how the Lord's full of compassion and mercy. When you go through a trial, when you're going through a difficulty, you'll see if you're pressing into Christ, you'll see his compassion for you. I love you. You'll see his mercy in a special way, I love you. I know it's hard for you. I'm walking along with you. I got you.

But then he says this in verse 12, "But above all my brethren, above all brothers, above all my sisters, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes. Your yes is to be yes and your no, no so that you may not fall under judgment." Now, he says, "Don't swear." He's not just talking about swear words and four-letter words and bad language. The Bible's complete and says, don't use those words, but that's not what he's talking about here specifically. He's talking about making an oath. He's talking about calling God as your witness down to something like, I swear to God, or I swear on my mama's grave, or I pinky swear, or I cross my heart that. In other words, it's not just my word, but I'm promising you on the God of heaven that this is true because my word's not good enough by itself. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Now, it's okay to take oaths. God allows that. When we get married, we take an oath because we're inviting Jesus Christ in as a witness to witness what we're doing. And we're making an oath to him that we're going to stay married until death do we apart. It's okay to make an oath at ordination going into the ministry. Lord, I'm giving

you my word that I heard your calling and I'm going to live for you until I meet you. It may be okay in the military when you're being sworn in or definitely in a court of law, when you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God. I mean, it's okay to call God as a witness, but not in every single conversation.

You know what? I'll pick you up after school. I swear to God, I will. You know what? I swear to God, this is going to happen if you keep doing what you're doing. I swear on my mama's grave, you can... you don't need to swear. You don't need to call God down as a witness for what you do. Just let your yes be yes. Let your no be no. Just let people know that when you say what you're going to say, you're going to do what you say you're going to do. Say what you mean and mean what you say, especially in the church. And by the way, permission, it's okay to tell people, no. I heard somebody say, yes. It is. It's okay to tell people no, because here's what we do in the Christian world. We hyper spiritualize it. Somebody asks us, would you be willing to, and they fill in the blank. And then I can't tell them no. I heard different. Let me pray about it.

But oftentimes we don't really mean to pray about it. I just need time, so I know how to tell you no in a way you can understand it. That's what we're really saying. So I've gotten kind of edgy these days when people say, I just need to pray about it. I'm like, tell me what you need to pray about so we can pray right now. Because I'd like to know what we're praying for so I can pray with you. Because if they really want to pray, we can do that. But most of the time, I'm not really praying. I'm just trying to

figure out how to say no to you in a way that doesn't offend you. Saying no is okay. Don't over promise and under-deliver. Hey, can you guys come over to dinner? No, can't do that. I'd love to tell you yes, but I know if I tell you that it's going to stress out me, it's going to stress someone. It's just no. Right now, we're in a season where it's no, it's okay to tell people no. Let your yes be yes and your no, be no.

I mean, that's what it means. Christians, let your word mean something. And if you do commit to something, then follow through even if you didn't want to do it in the first place. Because if you'd live this way, you'll make less promises. If you live this way, you'll say yes to a lot less. You'll say no to a lot more. You'll say the things that God actually wants you to be involved with, and it's okay to tell people, "Hey, love you. I'm not able to do that. I don't want to over-promise and under-deliver, but I'm happy that that's something that you're going to do." What's wrong with that? Let your yes be yes. Let your no be no, don't call down. God's going to do this and all this kinds, I cross my heart. I swear to God, I promise you. I swear on my mama's grave. You don't need to do that. As a Christian, your word should mean something.

I told you, yes, I will be there. I told you, no, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. I told you exactly what it is. And it's okay to pray about it. Don't get me wrong. I think it's okay to seek the Lord and ask the Lord, "What do you want me to do?" As long as that's not like a cop-out. If you're genuinely going to pray, I'm going to pray with my wife. We're going to decide together what we're going to do. But I'll get back to you by this time. Then get back to them by this time and then tell them what God told you. That's okay. We got too many Christians making too many false

promises. We got too many Christians. Oh yeah, count me in. Oh, I couldn't make it. That's sinful. Until Christ comes back, let your words mean something. Let them be true and sincere. Let them be true and sincere. And why is that important? Because when you're going through a time of crisis and you're going through trouble, it's easier to just be flippant with your words.

Okay, fine, that's fine. I'm going through a crisis right now. I don't know that I'm going to be able to do that. I can't answer that authoritatively right now. I need to wait to answer you or I'm going to tell you no right now. That's okay. And this is what God wants us to do until he gets here. Did you hear anything about the rapture? Did you hear anything about buying a white robe and move into the mountains because it's not there. That's not what Jesus wants to find you doing when he gets back. He wants to find you enduring the difficulties he brought into your life with great patience. He wants to see you strengthening yourself in him. He wants to see that you're refraining from complaining. He wants to see that you're following the other Godly examples and that you are using true and sincere words. And if you'll do that, you'll be ready for us coming.

Now, I can't tell you when you're going to meet Jesus, but when you do, you won't arrive one moment too soon or be there one moment too late. When tragedy happens on this side of heaven and we lose somebody, it's tragic to us. It's shocking to us. It's just the way the Lord planned it out to him. Nobody stands before Jesus where he says, "What are you doing here right now? Or How come it took you so long?" I mean, you're right on time. So I can't tell you the time that you're going to meet him. I

can't tell you he's for sure coming back in our lifetime. I can't tell you for sure that he's not. I don't know. What I can tell you for sure is that you will see him face to face. And if you put these five things into practice, here's what you're going to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Good job. Welcome into my kingdom."

And when you hear these five for the checklist, it doesn't mean go out and practice all five. It means submit yourself to the Lord so he can work those things through you. Maybe there's one specific one today that he showed you. This is you. This is what I wanted to show you, and it's the Lord's love in you to tell you, this is where I want to start working in your life. Will you let me in? Will you let me do this? Because if you'll build your life on Jesus, it'll be well with your soul. He'll be your cornerstone, he'll be your rock. He'll be your firm foundation. And that's how he wants you to live until he arrives. Amen? Amen.

Would you stand with me. Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we just want you to know, we love you. If you're here today and you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and you recognize you're a sinner and you've never repented of your sin, you've never turned your life over to Christ, and you want to make that moment now, you can tell Jesus that's what you want. Say, "Lord, I repent on my sins. I want to turn from my sin. I want to turn to you. I want to place my faith in you. Come into my life as my Savior and Lord and take over. Save me Lord." And he will. He indwell you with the power of His Holy Spirit and the presence of His Holy Spirit.

And if you've repented and believe the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit and purity of the Holy Spirit indwell you, what's the Lord showed you today? Where's the next step of faith you need to take? What do you need to put into practice? Will you write it down? Will you go do what he showed you to do? If you do, it'll be well with your soul. If you do, Jesus will become even a more firm foundation than he already is. God, we give you glory. We give you honor, we give you praise. Do a work as we sing to you today in Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give God some praise this morning for who he is?