



# Message **Transcript**

## God-Honoring Faith

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Our father in heaven, we give you all glory, honor, praise, and thanks for who you are. Lord, we are thrilled that we get to gather as your people and worship your name, that we get to seek your face. And now, Lord, we're excited that we get to hear your word, living in active word because Lord, we believe that when your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that we can hear your voice. So our prayer is speak Lord, for we are ready to hear. And so now, for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what Jesus 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.

When you're building a home or doing a building project, throughout the process there are what are called inspections. Inspections are part of the process because when you're building something, whether it's the HVAC or the electricity or the work of the carpentry around, you have to come in to make sure it meets code. Because along the way, if something's not right, then you have a chance to fix it before the final product. And even all the way through the final product, if you have a home that's being built, then you have a walkthrough at the end to see has this been done entirely to scale with the way that we wanted to do it? And if the owners say, no, this was wrong or this was wrong, then changes can be made before full ownership takes place. Inspections are important. We see it in all other aspects of our life too. Oftentimes we set doctor's appointments every six months to a year, not because we're sick, but because we want to get routine checkups.

We want to make sure that everything's okay so we don't go for a period of years and then show up at the doctor and he says, if you would've been here a couple of years ago, we could have dealt with this, but now things are out of control. Or good teachers will give you quizzes along the way before the final examination so you can kind of see where you're at and are you getting the material and are you sure you're understanding it so that the final doesn't come as a huge surprise or a shock to your system? The same is true for us spiritually. God loves you so much that throughout his word at different times, he gives spiritual checkups. He gives you an opportunity in his word to examine yourself and take a look inside of you to make sure that your trajectory in the right way, you're going the right way so that if you are, you can be confirmed and continue to journey the way you are.

And if you're not, you can make a course correction to get where he would like you to go. So today we're going to talk about what it means to have God honoring faith. Faith that is recognized by God, where God will look down at your faith and say, that's the kind of faith I approve. So that other people when they see your life would say, yeah, that's God honoring faith. That really reflects what I believe that the Bible says. And if you're willing to give yourself an examination this morning, I believe that God has a word for you. I want to encourage you to open your Bible up to the book of James chapter one. We're going to be in the last two verses, verses 26 and 27 today. And as you're turning to that place, you realize we've been talking as James begins telling us about what he's going to talk about, he addresses himself as a slave of the

Lord Jesus Christ.

And he tells us who he's writing to. And then he says, consider it all joy when you face trials of many kinds. So we talked about trials and how they're important for building spiritual muscle and God's the one who ordains trials and you're either getting ready to enter one, you're in one now or you're coming out of it. And chances are there's myriads of those going on at all times. Then we said, that's not enough. God also allows temptation in our life to see how we're going to respond to him, to see if we can strengthen our spiritual muscles and turn to him and let him provide the way out versus us doing our own thing. And then last week we talked about the word and how important it was to respond to the word and not just be hearers of the word, but also ones that put it into practice and are doers of the word.

Well, today what you're going to hear about is what it looks like if you're doing the things that God requires. What does God honoring faith look like? What's the result of that? And in these last two verses is really the cherry on the top of this first section. So here what he has to say... he says, if anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God, our father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world. Now you probably heard these two verses, and if you're like most Christians when you do Bible study, you're like, yeah, I get it and you move on. But because of that, and because this is so short today, I'm going to read it again so you can hear it and let this sink into your heart because this is really the examination of your faith.

It says, if anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless, pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world. And they're in those two short verses, he's really unlocking for us what God honoring faith looks like. How God honoring faith is recognized. How does God recognize your God honoring faith? How do others recognize your God honoring faith? And James is not the only author in the Bible that speaks to this. All of the Bible is really dual authorship. This is God's word. God is speaking. God chose men to pin this, but this is God's word and God cares so much about you.

He wants to make sure that you know that you're on the right track. Paul did this in 2 Corinthians 13:5. He says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith." Now, who is he talking to? Who's talking to a church. He was telling church people like you hey, examine yourself. Stop, pause, time out. Let's make sure that you really are of the Lord. Peter said the same thing in 2 Peter 1:10. He says, "Therefore brothers be all the more diligent to confirm your calling in election." In other words, if you say you're saved, let's make sure, let's confirm it. Even Jesus said, in the sermon on the mountain, Matthew chapter 7:21, "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom." On that day. There'll be many that say, many that say, but Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons? Did we not heal people? And then he'll say these words depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you.

So Jesus said, Paul said, Peter said, James is going to say just because you profess and say, I know Jesus doesn't mean that you know Jesus and I'm preparing you for the final exam because every single one of you is going to stand someday before the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. And today's message is to make sure that your trajectory in the right way, that you're going the right way because the worst thing ever would be to think that you're actually a believer to consider the fact when I die, I know I'm going to heaven and then find out on the other side, I wasn't right, I wasn't ready. And wouldn't it be good if you are that you can hear the Lord confirm today, you're going the right way, it's going good for you.

I'm affirming your God-honoring faith and that's what James wants to alert us to. He wants to show us three different ways that we can understand whether we have God-honoring faith, whether God is recognizing our faith. He's going to give us three of these today and let's start with the first. God-honoring faith is recognized when you number one tame your tongue. Let me say it again, God honoring faith is recognized when you tame your tongue. Now this is really interesting because these three aren't going to be what you think about when people ask you, am I really a Christian? Many times when people say, am I really a Christian? We say, well, did you pray the prayer? Do you believe Jesus died? Do you believe Jesus rose? Okay, well then yeah, you're going to heaven. That's not where James starts. James says if you've really been saved, then one of the evidences that you've been saved and one of the evidences of your God-honoring faith is that your tongue is being tamed.

Notice what he says in verse 26. He says, "If anyone thinks himself to be

religious..." Religious is the outward expression of what you say you believe, how you practice. "If anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not..." What? "Bridle his tongue, tame his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless." Now, James understands something that we need to understand and that is this, your tongue is not connected to the back of your throat, but your tongue is connected to your heart. What comes out of your mouth is truly what's going on inside. If you ever get around people that are excited about something, whether it's winning a championship or getting engaged or the birth of a child or a new job or a promotion or something that happens, they won the lottery, there's an expression that comes out of their mouth because of something that's going on in their heart.

And if you're ever around people that are bitter or complainy or whiny, it all starts in the heart because your tongue's connected to your heart. And here's the point God's trying to make. If you're truly saved over time, week later, month later, year later, two years later, decade later, your tongue will look different than it did when it was first saved. Why? Because your heart is changing. And if your mouth is saying the same things and talking the same way as when you say you got saved, that's a warning light that perhaps nothing's changed on the inside because one of the evidences of being born again is taming the tongue. So let's be clear on this. The gospel is that God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. We are saved by grace through faith. It's not our own doing. It's a gift of God. Not one of us can boast.

We're not saved because we speak well, we're not saved because we talk the right talk, we're saved because there was nothing we can do, nothing we could do. And God sent his own son Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins, who took all of our sin, took the wrath of God, was buried in the grave, and three days later rose again and offered life to those who would turn from their sin and trust him. That's the only way that we're saved. But the Bible also goes on to say for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. In other words, we're not saved by our good works, but we are for sure saved for good works. And here's the problem in the church, here's the problem in the church. The church is, we say statements like this that no matter what you do, God can't love you anymore than he already does. Is that true? Six of you agree. Okay, you're nervous now to answer, aren't you?

Is it true that if you're born again, that God loves you no matter what you do? That's totally true, but we tend to make that a blanket statement to tell people then it doesn't matter what you do because God loves you anyway, so do whatever you want. It's an abuse of the relationship. It means if God loves me no matter what I do, and even if I do wrong, God will continue to love me, then why would I want to continue to do what displeases God, I want to do what's good and where I don't measure up, his grace covers that. That's the message. And here's what James is saying. He's saying take inventory of your life and think about your tongue. Think about what comes out of your mouth. Is it God honoring faith the way you talk? Does God see it as God honoring?



Do other people see it as God honoring? Because it's either an evidence that you're moving in the right direction or it's a blinking warning light that hey, perhaps there's nothing that's changed inside the heart. And here's really where we get that from the word of God, in Matthew chapter 12, during the ministry of Jesus, here's what he said. He said this, Matthew chapter 12, verse 33, he said, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad for the tree is known by its fruit." Here's what he was saying, how you live your life is evidence of what you believe. We tend to think that Christianity is just a profession of faith. Well, if I say I believe in Jesus, and you better believe that I believe in Jesus, and even if I don't act like it, think like it, talk like it, it doesn't matter because I'm telling you I believe in him.

That's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, bad trees can't produce good fruit and good trees can't produce bad fruit. So if you're not producing a tongue that is representative of what's going on in your heart, it's because your heart hasn't been converted. He goes on to say as he's talking to the religious people of the day that claim that they knew God, even though Jesus Christ is fully God, was standing in front of them and they didn't believe, he says, "You brood of vipers, how can you being evil speak What is good for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings out the good treasures. And what is good? The evil man brings out of his evil treasure. What is evil? But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for in the day of judgment."

Now, the fact that we didn't all just gasp means we didn't hear that. You didn't

even account for every careless word. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God with our tongue. God holds us accountable to that. For by your words, you'll be justified and by your words, you'll be condemned. If you've been converted, your heart changes. And if your heart changes, your words will change. And as your words change, that's evidence as to actually what you believe. If there's been no change in your tongue, there's been no change in your heart. That's what he's saying. That's what Jesus said. That's what James is saying. Notice what Jesus also says in Mark chapter seven. In Mark chapter seven, people were talking about, well, you're only righteous and clean if you eat the right kinds of foods.

And here's what Jesus said in Mark 7:18. He said, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into a man from outside can't defile him because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach and is eliminated." And he was saying that which proceeds out of the man is what defiles the man. He's like, what you eat doesn't make you clean or unclean. Just because you eat something that goes in your stomach and comes out, that's not a big deal. It's what comes out of your heart. That's where everything starts. Notice what he says, for from within out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, evil, slander, pride and foolishness. All of these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. Before sin ever takes place on the outside, it's always conceived on the inside.

Any grievous sin that you see, any grievous sin you've committed, it all started internally. That's why Jesus said, what needs to be cleansed? You need to be cleansed from the heart, from the inside out because if your heart isn't changed, if your life isn't changed, you can't do the things required that the word of God tells you to do. You can't do those things. It's impossible to tame your tongue. I'm a pastor, so sometimes when I'm out with people and they know I'm a pastor and coaching football or playing golf or doing something, swear words come out of their mouth. And then when they recognize, oh, I'm playing with the pastor, sorry pastor, sorry pastor. And if they're not Christian, I tell them this, you can't help it. No big deal, because if Christ hasn't changed your heart, you can try not to do something, but it'll be an exercise in futility and the only thing that will happen is you'll get more and more frustrated because you can't do it. And even if you're tamping it down, that's the word that you're thinking of in your heart, right?

And this is what James is saying. He goes, here's the evidence. Here's the evidence. You want to know if somebody's a believer. You want to know if you're a believer, are you taming your tongue? Not perfectly, but increasingly. That's why we have so many scriptures in the New Testament. And when we get to James chapter three, we'll spend another whole day on this. But in Colossians chapter four and verse six, here's what the Lord tells us in Colossians chapter four and verse six through the apostle Paul, he says this, "Let your speech always be with grace as though seasoned with salt so that you will know how you should respond to each person." And in Ephesians 4:29 says almost the exact same thing, the book of Ephesians chapter four

and verse 29. He says it like this, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

In other words, when should you tame your tongue? Always, always. There should always be a restraint on that sucker. When you're going to speak and when you're not going to speak because of who the Lord is. And for those of us who are extroverted, and for those of us who speak for a living like yours truly, here's a verse of conviction. Proverbs chapter 10 and verse 19, when there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The more you talk, the more you're going to sin. So you got to put a bridle on that thing. That's why he says if you don't bridle your tongue, you're deceiving your heart. If you say I'm saved, but there's no bridle on your tongue, you're deceiving yourself. If your language hasn't changed over time, you're deceiving yourself because your heart is really telling you through your mouth and expressing what it is that you believe and who it is that you actually are.

And sometimes through the heart, here's what happens. The Lord tells you, don't say that anymore. Don't talk to them about that. Shut your mouth and know you could win that argument. Don't do it. And other times, you're just backing up because you don't want to tell them the truth because you don't want to lose a friendship. Use the tongue for this. Tell them the truth, speak the truth in love, and there's this back and forth with the Lord as you walk with him in relationship so that you can grow with him. Now, when I think about a bridle, I think about a horse being bridle where you put a bit

in a horse's mouth with a bridle. And I don't know a whole lot about that, but my daughters have taken horseback riding lessons. So I called their horse trainer yesterday to ask, "Can you give me any insight on a bridle and how it works?"

And this gal has three horses and she says, yeah, she's like, "It's different for every horse." She's like, "You need to understand there's one of our horses I use it all the time. There's another horse I don't." And here's what she said. I wrote it down. She said, "The more in tune the horse is with the rider, the less they need the bridle because they know what the rider wants before the rider even asks." And I said, "That's my whole sermon tomorrow. That's awesome. Thank you." What she was saying is, when the horse understands the rider and knows where the rider wants to go and know this is the direction they want to lead, the rider doesn't need to give it a whole lot of direction because the horse knows where to go. The more in tune you are with Jesus, the less corrective nature he needs to be with you because he knows you have his heart and he's going to go that way and he knows you're going to follow because you are in a good relationship. Isn't that a great story? That's what James is talking about.

And it's important that we know the language of the Lord. It reminds me of the familiar story of the preacher that sold his horse to an atheist. And he told the atheist, when the atheist bought the horse, "Hey, there's two words you need to know because I trained my horse as a Christian horse and to make it go, you have to say, praise the Lord." And the atheist said, "Well, how do you get him to stop?" He said, "You have to say hallelujah." Well, the preacher gave him a great price and it was a great horse. So

the atheist took it even though he didn't want to have to use those words. And one day he was out riding the horse and he said, "Praise the Lord," and the horse took off and he's like, I want to go faster. So he was like, "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." Horse took off in a dead sprint. He was having a ball until he realized the horse was about ready to go over a cliff. And then he couldn't remember the word, hallelujah.

So he starts quoting every biblical word. He is like, Bible, Jesus, cross, amen. Nothing's happening. And then it clicked in his head and he's like hallelujah. And the horse stopped right at the edge of the cliff and he looked down at that half mile that he would've fallen. He's sweating bullets. He's relieved, and in his peace he muttered, "Praise the Lord." That's why you got to know the language of our savior because there's different times he's going to instruct you in different ways. Amen? God honoring faith is recognized when you tame your tongue. Number two is this, God honoring faith is recognized when you help the helpless. When you help the helpless. He says pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this, in other words, outward practices that God would accept look like this. To visit orphans and widows in their distress.

And visit here doesn't mean a drive by, it doesn't mean dropping over to their house. Visit has the understanding of hospitable. Visiting has the understanding of I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to be there for you. I'm going to help out. And why widows and orphans? A widow is someone who's lost their husband, a wife who's lost

their husband. An orphan is somebody who has no parents. And in the first century, much like in the Third World countries that we have today, you lose your husband, there is no life insurance. There is no help. There's nobody looking out for you. You're an orphan in another country, there is no orphanage, there is no agency. There's nobody that's going to help. And I've had the privilege of being in India, but I've had the unfortunate experience of watching in India where I've seen kids that are four and two years old walking down the streets, going through the garbage and all sorts of stuff.

You wouldn't even want to go near trying to find food so they can have something to eat because if they don't, nobody's going to do anything for them. So what did he say pure religion looked like? It was helping those who couldn't help themselves. That's what it means. Now we like to say God helps those who help themselves. That's not biblical. God wants you to help those who can't help themselves. That's biblical. It means you help them. It means you fight for their justice. It means you stand up for them when they can't stand up for themselves and that's our job. That's an evidence that you truly believe in Jesus. When you want to help the helpless, one of the things that happens in your life when Jesus becomes the Lord of your life is you no longer just hanging in your clique with your group that likes your stuff in your way.

You start having a heart for different kinds of people. You start loving people and hanging out with people that you said before I would say there's no way we'd even hang out. They wouldn't hang out with me and I wouldn't hang out with them, now we're friends. Or you see people that are even hostile to the gospel, but because of Christ's love for you, you can demonstrate love to them. Helping the helpless means that you

don't walk by when you see a need. Jesus was compassionate. The New Testament uses the word compassion or the English word pity simultaneously, interchangeably to say when you see a need, meet it. Because we have a tendency to want to see a need and then hope somebody else does something about it or see a need and alert somebody else to that need.

Here's what James says, here's what religion looks like. If you've truly been converted, you want to know that you have God honoring faith. Not only see your tongue being tamed, but when you see a need, help the helpless, meet the need, do what you need to do. And throughout Israel's history, this is what God kept trying to tell them over and over. He wasn't concerned about their outward religious practices. If we had time to do a whole study of the Old Testament today, we could walk through it, but just give you a glimpse, how about Isaiah chapter one? Oh, through the book of Isaiah, we see this, but in Isaiah chapter one, starting in verse 11, here's what God begins to ask the children of Israel.

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to me," says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, of the fat of fed cattle, and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts. Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination of me, new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies. I can't endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to me. I am wary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Yes, even though you



multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood." What's he saying? Aren't they doing all the things he required? Aren't they sacrificing blood? The blood of lambs and goats? Aren't they taking the bulls and saying we're doing that? Aren't they worshipping him? Aren't they spending their time praying? Aren't they going through all the religious routine that God has required of them?

Yes, but while they're doing that, there's injustice in their land. They're turning a blind eye to it. They don't care about their culture, they don't care about God. They're just going through the religious motions in hopes that God cares. And here's what God says, I could care less about your outward religious practices. It's making me sick if you got sin in your heart. So here's what he tells them to do. Here's what he tells them to do. He says, "Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Reprove the ruthless. Defend the orphan. Plead for the widow."

What's he saying? Start putting into practice what the word says. Start living the way I want you to live. Help the helpless. Take care of them. Quit turning a blind eye. Quit living in sin. It'd be the same thing you'd say to the church today. Quit living in sin and then coming to church and offering me your worship. I'm sick of it. Quit shacking up with your boyfriend or girlfriend and fornicating and then coming to church and worshipping. I'm done with that. I'm covering my ears to you. Quit living in adultery and then coming to church and pretending you're a Christian. Quit cheating all your friends in the business world and then coming to church and pretending you're a Christian. Quit using your tongue as a weapon of slander and gossip everywhere you go and then

coming to church and praising me with that tongue. I'm sick of it. That's what God's saying.

He was saying to Israel and he says it to the church today. He says if your heart does not reflect me, quit doing your worthless religious practices. But don't you love that God doesn't leave us there? God gives us so much conviction. But then he's like, let me tell you something else though. He says this in the very next verse in Isaiah one, verse 18. "Come now, let's reason together," says the Lord. "Get closer. Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." Here's what God says. "If that's you and you're feeling that conviction, come here. I'll cover you in my blood. I'll cleanse you in my blood. You can't fix yourself, but with my grace, I'll dispense it to you if you're ready to change right now." Isn't that good news? God wants to take who we are and change us because you can't change yourself. Only God can change you.

Instead, he says, come to me. Jesus Christ died on the cross for all your sins. Come to him. Quit going through the motions. Just professing something with your mouth that you're not actually living out, that you're not talking about and you're not doing. Quit going through the practices. Quit telling everybody, I'm Methodist, I'm Baptist, I'm Presbyterian. I [inaudible 00:26:27], doesn't matter, what's your heart doing? How's your tongue? How's your behavior? Help the helpless. Now here's the question you're going to ask, "Pastor Jeff, who are the helpless people? Who are we supposed to help?" First of all, whose job is it to help the helpless? Jurors, and it's

mine. Sometimes we say it's the church's job, and that's usually a cop out to say, pastor, that's your job and the staff's job, you guys do that, we'll give you some money. You go do that. It's not my job. It's not your job. It's our job. It's our job to help the helpless.

Now here's what you're going to say. Well, who are they? Where do I find some of these people? Here's what I would say. Here's what I say. Get close to Jesus and open your eyes. They're everywhere. It's not for you to target them. You'll be a target for them. They'll see you. You'll have opportunities all over the place to help helpless people. I've seen people in our church do it all the time. I've watched people pay for other people's education. I've watched people take care of other people's children during the season. I've watched people build encouragement. I've watched people foster, I've watched people adopt. There's myriads of different ways and we don't turn it into a program. We just keep our eyes open in that season that when I see a need that I can meet, I'm just going to meet it because that's what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ, that's helping the helpless.

And what we tend to do is we tend to do exactly what the attorney did when he met Jesus and he was hearing these same truths. You remember that in Luke chapter 10? You'll be familiar with the story Jesus told after I tell you, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test saying, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Just much like we're talking about today. What are the evidences I'm going to heaven? Just tell me. And he said to him, "What is written in the law and how does it read to you?" And he answered, "You should love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul

and with all your strength and with all your might. And you should love your neighbor as yourself." And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly, do this and you will live."

So if I love God with everything and love others the way he wants and I'm doing what he wants me to do, then that shows, yep, that's it. But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who's my neighbor?" What was he saying? Yeah, I get I'm supposed to love you and I get I'm supposed to love others, but where's the limit of that stop? When can I stop loving them? Is it just my neighborhood? Is it just people in my socioeconomic class? Is it just people with my skin color? Is it just people of my gender? Where does it stop just so I know what to target because the world's a really big place. So Jesus tells him a story, the Good Samaritan. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers and he got beat leaving him half dead, and along happened what? A priest.

A priest knows that if he comes near that guy and he's dead, he can't do his official religious duties, so he avoids them altogether on the other side of the road. Then comes a Levi. Levi's going to go up to him to see whether he knows him or not. He looks down, doesn't recognize him. He too leaves, but a Samaritan. Now, the Jews hated Samaritans. They couldn't even mouth the word Samaritan. The Samaritan comes along. What's he do? He bandages up the wounds. He helps the guy heal, puts him on his own animal, takes him into town, puts him up in the inn, pays for him to stay, tells the innkeeper, "I'm going to be back in town, if he needs any other incurred expenses, I'll pay them all." And Jesus said, which one do you think was the neighbor?

And the guy can't even say the word Samaritan. Well, the one who helped him.

Then go be that. It means this. It's not about who you're targeting. It's about when you open your eyes spiritually and you see a need that you can help, you meet that need. And different ones of us can handle different needs in different seasons at different times because life is dynamic and it's always changing. And it's not for you to be a judge of how somebody else should be compassionate. It's to allow the Lord God to convict you of what it looks like for you. How can you have God honoring faith? So the Lord knows I can entrust you with this person. I can entrust you with this situation because I know that you'll meet that need and that pleases my heart. That's God honoring faith. Amen? When we tame our tongue, when we help the helpless, then we are showing God we know how to respond. We know how to be that kind of person.

And again, if since the time that you made a profession of faith in Christ you've seen your heart change, you've loved people differently, you've met needs differently, you've been generous in a different way, and you continue to grow in that, again not perfectly, but increasingly, it's in sign. It's in evidence saying you're on the right way. If from the time that you say you know Jesus, you're like, I can't think of one thing that's ever changed, that's a warning light on your dashboard saying perhaps, just perhaps, you truly don't have genuine faith in Christ. Perhaps it's just been a religious profession in hopes that one day you'd go to heaven when you have no desire to let the Lord change you. That's what he's telling us.

And then he gives us the third. He tells us [inaudible 00:31:01] God, honor and

faith involves taming your tongue and it involves helping the helpless. But number three is this, taming the tongue also means that you will withdraw from worldliness. You withdraw from worldliness. Notice these last words in verse 27. It says, "And to keep one's speech unstained by the world." That means not polluted by, not stained by. You know what it's like if you've ever got ready to go out somewhere and you're putting on clean clothes and maybe you're getting ready to go to a dinner or do something else, and all of a sudden you spill mustard, ketchup, barbecue sauce, something like that, there's no way to hide it.

The only thing you can do is change your clothes. You can't wash that thing out. You can't get it done in time. This is what he's talking about. He goes, your withdrawal from the world is what's keeping you unsullied. It's what's keeping you pure before the Lord, walk away from that. So think about this, when did you come to Christ? Has there been a progressive walk away from some of the worldliness that you were involved in? Now, when we say world, you need to understand, I'm talking about the system of the world. For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, I'm not talking about the world we live in. Psalm 24 says, the world is the Lord's and everything in it. God wants us to take care of his world. He loves the world. What we're talking about here is the world's system.

The world's system that focuses on three people, me, myself, and I. That system is what he's saying, you need to start walking away from that system. You need to start taking steps away from worldliness. And we see this in the book of 1 John where he reveals to us probably as clear as anybody what this looks like. In 1 John chapter

two, in verses 15, 16 and 17, he says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world." He's talking about the world system. "Do not love this world system or the things in this world system. If anyone loves this world system, the love of the Father is not in him for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world."

If you're living for this world, if this is the primary focus of what you're doing, it's evidence that you're not living for Jesus. It doesn't mean that we don't have responsibility in this world. It doesn't mean we don't love the world that God gave us. It doesn't mean that we're not doing our best to leave the world a better place than when we got here, all that stuff. But if I'm living for this world with the lust of my flesh, which means I'm living to please me, I only get one life and I'm going to make the most of it. If I'm looking around to see what are the things that can please me, the lust of my eyes, what can I get? What can I grab? What can I covet? And I'm living with the pride of life which says I don't need God to enjoy it here.

I'm living for me. When I'm living that way, it's a warning light. It is blinking, it is flashing, you need to repent. Because once you come to Christ, there is a walking away from worldliness because the one who is in you is walking away from it and taking you down that path. Man, look at who I was 30 years ago, I'm not the same guy I was 30 years ago. Not even close. Am I perfect? Not even close. Ask my wife, ask my family, ask anybody that knows me well, but have I been increasing in my withdrawal from worldliness? Absolutely. And why? Because God wants us to be holy. He wants us to be holy. There's a pull inside of every believer to reflect the separation

that God would have for you. Here how God tells us in Ephesians chapter one and verse four, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him.

What does God desire of all Christians to be holy and blameless? Who me? Yeah, you. He wants you to live holy. Now when we hear the word holy, here's what we think. You're taking away all my fun. I can't do anything anymore. No, the reality is when you separate from the world and separate yourself unto God, that's where you're going to receive the fullest measure of his joy and what that looks like. He's calling you to a place of greater fulfillment and greater joy than you've ever, ever had. Peter tells us the same thing. In 1 Peter chapter one verses 14 and 15, here's the way he says it, "As obedient children do not be conformed to the former lust, which were yours in your ignorance, but like the holy one who called you be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written you shall be holy for I am holy."

What is God's desire? Holiness that you would be set apart, that you would be different, that you would look different because of who you are and in what you do. Even in 1 Thessalonians chapter four and verse seven, he says it like this, "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but for sanctification," it's the idea that we want to be in the world, but not of the world. It's the idea of a boat on the water. You want to be on the water, not in the water. You don't want the boat to take up the water. You just want to be on it. We're going to be in this world but we're not going to be of this world. It's why when we sin, the Lord shows us who we truly are and we cry out like David did in Psalm 51, created me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right



spirit within me.

I want to be like you want me to be. We learn in 1 Samuel 2:2, there is no one holy like the Lord. Indeed, there is no one beside you, nor is there any rock like our God. The more time you spend with God, the more you realize he's not like us. He doesn't enjoy the things that we naturally enjoy in our flesh, he's different. And the more time you spend with him, the more different you're going to become, the more change it's going to take place. Your tongue will be tamed. You will help the helpless. You will withdraw from the evil in our world, in our society and the wickedness that you see, there'll be a pull away from it. And the reason God takes you through trials, and the reason God tests you with temptation is to see how well you're going to respond to his word, because when you do, this is the evidence that you're responding correctly. And he's always going to give us tests, always does. Just yesterday I got another test.

Anybody here ever been involved in youth sports before? I'm kind of an assistant to the assistant coach on our team, but I could feel my old man coming out yesterday as I was standing on the sideline, as I watched four of our kids get targeted, helmet to helmet, got knocked out of the game and it was getting brutal. And the other side was cheering and they were teaching how to do things dirty. And then the language of our coaches got more colorful on our sideline and I could feel my blood pressure rising. And I could feel that old man from like 25 years ago saying, I know what I can do. And so I asked the guy, he's not a Christian brother, he kind of oversees the football league. I said, "Hey, what happens if I walk out in the field and grab that kid and tell

him, don't you ever do that again?" And he said, well, he said, "You'll be immediately ejected." And he goes, "You'll have a hundred dollars fine, and you'll have to go to an anger management class."

And I said, "I'm good with the first two. I just don't know that I have time to do the anger management class." But all kidding aside, what keeps my tongue bridled is to know that I want to represent Christ and that I can't respond the way I used to respond. I can't do the things that I would want to do and I can't say the things that I want to say. And I got to trust God in a situation that I don't need to have control over him, that's different than I would've handled it 20, 30 years ago. I promise you that, because God's working differently in my life than he was then. And isn't it true that when God takes us through trials, that our ability as Christians to handle certain things now, there's no way we could have handled there, we couldn't have got through that temptation there. There's no way I would've responded to the word that way.

And here's the beauty. Even if you don't pass the test, and even if you failed that temptation, even if you fell down in that trial, here's the beauty. Here's the beauty. God's grace is sufficient for you, and he invites you to get back up and say, okay, now you know. Okay, let's keep journeying. Let's keep on the right trajectory. And here's why, this is why it's so important because I know this with my whole heart, and the older I get, the more I know it to be true. Every single one of us is going to die. Every single person I'm not talking to is going to die. And every single person that dies appears before the glory of Jesus Christ to give an account for their life the second that they die. I want you to be ready for that.

I want everybody in the world to be ready for that. This is a loving message that we're getting from God today saying, hey, are you seeing some evidence in your life or are you deceiving yourself? Is your tongue different than it was when you got converted? Are you compassionate for people you weren't compassionate before? Do you find yourself walking away from what you used to walk away from or do you still listen to the same music with the same people, drinking the same drinks, doing the same stuff and nothing's changed? Because if you haven't seen that change, then that's God's message to you today. That's warning light, saying, hey, would you repent and allow me to be the Lord of your life? I'm not looking for your religion. I'm looking for everything in your heart. Would you let me come in and take it over? That's what I'm looking for.

And if he has your heart, then what is the Lord shown you today? I know there's a lot of conviction in this message because I've been preparing to preach it. So what's he been showing you about your tongue? What's he been showing you about your attitude towards those in need? What's he been showing you about withdrawing from ungodliness? What do you need to put into practice right now? That's what this message is about. And God loves you so much that he wants you to be prepared because if you'll follow the cues of taming your tongue and helping the hopeless and withdrawing from wordiness, and you follow the cues, here's what's going to happen. You're going to be corrected and along the line, you're going to be bridled all the way to the kingdom. And when you stand in front of Jesus, here's what you're going to hear, "Well done good and faithful servant, way to go. Hey, come here. I'm going to

present you faultless before my father in heaven. He has been waiting to meet you." And in perfection Jesus is going to celebrate you as he presents you before the Father.

That's what this is about. Not because of anything you've done, but because of your willingness to allow God to change you. Isn't that a great message? Isn't that great conviction and encouragement to us this morning? When you hear the word... whether it was Isaiah, when he saw the Lord, he heard holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty. John in the book of Revelation hears, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. My prayer and desire for us today is not only we'd sing holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, but we would represent and be holy, holy, holy because of who Christ is in us. It's not us that does the work. It's Christ in us, the hope of glory. It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me, the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

This message is not about you going out and fixing yourself and doing better. This message is allowing Christ in your life and giving him full reign in your life to do everything that he wants to do. Amen? Would you stand with me? Our Father in heaven, we give you all glory, honor, and praise for who you are. We say that you are holy, holy, holy, that there is no one like you. And Lord in our flesh, we say, there's no way we could be that, but with Christ in us we can. If you're here today and those warning lights were going off all over the place, perhaps it was God's way of saying to you, "You don't know me. You need a relationship with me."

And if you want a relationship with Christ, here's how you can pray. Dear Jesus, I know I need you. Right now I want to turn for my sin, and I want to trust you as my personal Lord and Savior, come into my life and take it over. For those of us who are believers, the Holy Spirit's been showing us something. You ask him to speak to you, he spoke to you. What do you need to put into practice? Father, I pray that through your son and by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would convict every single person here just to take their next step of faith, what that looks like, in grace so they can grow more and more in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. We give you all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for his word today?