

The Double-Minded Man - James

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch's sermon on James emphasizes the necessity of aligning faith with actions to avoid the pitfalls of double-mindedness.

Duration: 47:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, James 1:1-18, James 2:1, James 2:14-17, James 3:8-10

Topics: "Double Mindedness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of drawing near to God and purifying our hearts. He emphasizes the need to cleanse ourselves from double-mindedness and to have a single-minded devotion to God. The speaker also addresses the issue of partiality in the church, highlighting the need to treat all people equally, regardless of their social status or appearance. He encourages believers to be doers of the word and not just hearers, emphasizing the practicality of the book of James in our daily lives.

Transcript

Turn with me, please, to the book of James, chapter 1. We have been going through the Bible book by book, week by week, and we're coming close to the end, and we've come to the book of James, and for those who are new with us this morning, we provide an introduction to the book in the Sunday School, and then we take one part of the book, either a verse or a theme or a message, out of the book for the Sunday morning service, and we've come to the book of James, a very controversial book. Many people don't like the book because it requires action on our part. We're all very happy when we can talk about the theory and the theology of our salvation, and about heaven, and about how many angels can fit on the head of a pin, and where did Cain get his wife from, and all of these things that are really fairly irrelevant or very irrelevant to our lives.

It's very tough when we come to a book like James, that really is practical, and that requires of us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. And so let's read from James chapter 1, and I'm going to read the first 18 verses. James chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he passes away.

For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. And so the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

Now, we saw in the Sunday school this morning that one of the things of the book of James is that it's filled with these contrasts, and I didn't count them, but I guess there may have been 20 different contrasts that he compares, the rich and the poor, speaking and doing, believing and doing, various contrasts right throughout the book. It is a book which really, as I said, is a problem to many people because it requires practical application, and for this reason there are certain theologians who discard the book, and they say, well, you know, this is really not an important book. And there are many Christians who discard the book because they don't like the message of the book which says it is not just believing, but it is doing.

Show me your faith by your works. Now, I want us to be very clear before we get into the message that we are not saved by the things that we do. The Old Testament says that even our best righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God.

We cannot save ourselves by trying to do the right things. We can do as many right things as we like, it will never cancel out all the bad. Only what Jesus did at the cross of Calvary is able to wipe away our sin and is able to cleanse us and is able to make us perfect before God.

But, now that we are saved, if we are saved, if we have been washed in the blood, if we believe in and on the Lord Jesus, there has to be a change of life. And this is the problem today, is that many, many Christians, and I would dare say by far the majority of Christians today, have no difference between their former life before Christ and their life after Christ. Because there is the separation of saying, well, what I believe and what I do are really two different things.

And this is the message of James, and he's saying, no, they are not two different things, they are the same thing. And one of the messages of the book of James is the message of integrity. And we touched on this in the Sunday school this morning, so bear with me.

The word integrity, we only associate with money today. But the word integrity has to do with any area of life. And integrity literally means of one piece.

Of one piece. In other words, it is solid. And we speak about the fact that a building has integrity.

In other words, it is not cracked, it's not breaking apart. We speak about a piece of metal, it has integrity. It is not flawed, it is not filled with all sorts of impurities.

It is of one piece. And as Christians, we need to be men and women of integrity. We need to be of one piece.

We cannot be two different people. And that's the message of James. And he uses this word, being double-minded.

In verse 8, I think it is. He is a double-minded man, unstable in his ways. Now, when we have this word translated into English, double-minded, I think that it captures some of the essence of what James was trying to explain.

But we need to go to the Greek to understand exactly the depth of what he was saying. This word, double-minded, is made up of two... The word is dipsoukos. Dipsoukos.

It is made up of two parts. The first part, dip, and then soukos. Dip or di, we get that word dichotomy, or different English words that have di as the prefix, simply means two.

Two. And so, soukos means soul. And so he says that this man is two-souled.

He has two souls. Now, obviously we understand that none of us can have two souls. We only have one soul.

But then that's why the English translator doesn't translate it as two souls, but as two minds. One mind for God, one mind for the flesh. One mind for the spirit, one mind for the world.

Two minds in the same individual. Now, we know that we have people that we call schizophrenic. They have two personalities in one body.

But you know, it's amazing that the majority of Christians seem to be schizophrenic. They have two minds, two lives. One in the church, one out of the church.

One when they're with God or the things of God, one outside in the world. Two-souled and two-minded. And, of course, the problem is that people who are like this, and unfortunately many Christians are like this, the problem is we're not questioning their sincerity.

When it comes to the things of God, they are absolutely sincere about doing the things that God wants them to do. About believing the right things, about living the right kind of life. But when they come into contact with the world, or when they're outside of the church, those good intentions disappear.

And the pull of the world and the temptations of the flesh and the old nature and the old way of living and of doing things just becomes overpowering. And so they come back to church on Sunday, and they hear the word, and they repent, and they have absolutely all the intention to do the right thing. And so they're between these two things all the time.

And right through the book, he draws a contrast between these two things. And he says, you can't be that way. And he gives the warning here, and he says that a man who is double-minded, in verse 8, is unstable in all his ways.

You see, when there's that kind of instability, where I really have these two personalities, my Christian personality and my worldly personality, that's going to flow right through the rest of your life. Every area of your life is going to be unstable. You're going to be unreliable.

Your emotions are going to be on this roller coaster all the time. There are times that you rejoice, and you feel blessed, and you feel the presence of God, and there are times you don't even know whether you're saved. This is a terrible way to live.

We all observe teenagers who are like that. That's just part of the hormone problem that teenagers struggle with, and just this up and down all the time, these two minds all the time. And in fact, he goes a little bit further, and he illustrates this, and he says he is double-minded, he is unstable in all his ways, and he is, verse 6, he is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

And that's the thing about the waves. These waves are so powerful, and we've seen the destruction that they can bring, and tsunamis, and other great events when these waves come crashing. And yet, they are so powerful, and yet they come to the seashore, and they end up being nothing.

They're great, and they're high, and then they just go low. That's one of the things about a wave. And when you do science or mathematics, you learn about waves.

And one of the things about a wave is that it doesn't just have an up, it also has a down. It doesn't just have a peak, it also has a trough. And he is saying that people who are double-minded are like those unstable waves.

They have highs, and they have lows. Now, we understand that as a Christian, we're always going to have high points and low points. But, you know, when we have these terrible extremes, that's not a nice way to live.

That's very traumatic for the individual, and it's very disconcerting for those around you who don't know what to expect next. And so, as Christians, yeah, there will be high points. But, you know, what needs to happen is that those lows need to be leveled out.

And maybe there will be high points, and there will be not-so-high points in our experience, instead of these extremes. And that's part of the deal when we're immature emotionally, but it's also part of the deal when we're immature spiritually. And remember, the book of Ephesians chapter 4 speaks about those who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, a sign of spiritual immaturity.

When we're spiritually mature, we know what we believe. I don't change, and I think you're probably grateful that I don't change what I believe every week. And I come back on Sunday morning and say, Hey, folk, you know, I've thought about it, and, you know, I think we're not going to go to heaven anyway.

I thought about it, and I think, well, maybe Jesus is not going to come again. But, you know, last week I believed that this is the infallible Word of God, but, you know, I think it's just a lot of stories. You wouldn't be very comfortable with a preacher who changes his mind every week.

And yet we understand that that is part of the deal with a new Christian, that there are times that he says, Yeah, I believe. And there are times he says, Well, you know, I don't really know if I believe. And so what we need to do is we need to grow up.

We need to get beyond that awkward stage where we're going up and down, and we need to get to a point where we're more stable. Where we don't have these two minds. But, you know, the sad thing is that when you have an adult who's never grown up, who still acts like a teenager, who's still going up and down, who still has these highs and these incredible lows in their faith, simply meaning they haven't grown, they haven't matured.

And so he says that we ought not to be double-minded like this. We should not be tossed by the wind. And, you know, the wind speaks of doctrine in Ephesians, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

But, you know, the wind is not just doctrine, the wind may be circumstances. And, you know, when things go well, I hear the jackpot's several hundred million at the moment, and you win that, somebody won a lotto somewhere in, I don't remember, the East Coast or somewhere last night, three hundred and something million. I'm sure that individual is riding the crest of the wave, right on top there.

And then tomorrow when the IRS takes their share, they're going to come all the way down again. You see, circumstances dictates, and so when things are good, when Friday comes and I get the paycheck and I have the weekend off, I feel great. When Monday comes and I have no more money and I have to go back to work, I don't feel so good.

We go through these ups and these downs and these tremendous cycles all the time. But we need to come to a place where we are no longer like that, where we're not unstable, and where we are more like God. And as much as it's good that we have leaders who are stable, it's wonderful to have a God who is stable.

Can you imagine if we came to God today and God said, well, you know, I'm not in a good mood today. I don't feel like listening to your complaints. And then the next day God says, come in, you know, let me hear what you... We never know what we're going to get with God.

We never know if He's going to receive us or not receive us. We never know whether He's going to just zap us and kill us, or whether He's going to shower us with blessings and with love. One of the wonderful things about God is that He does not change.

And He is defined as that in the Scripture. I'm the God who does not change, and changes not. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And you know, you come to God on a Monday morning, or you come to God on Friday afternoon, He is the same. And James deals with this, and he says that God, verse 17, every good and every perfect gift comes from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. There's no variation.

God is the same all the time. Now, we know what variation means. Things are different, things change.

And so you can have variations on a theme in music. So you have a theme, but you have different versions of that theme played out in different ways. You have variations on a color.

And so you can have blue. And there's a lot of blue in the audience. But John's shirt is blue and my shirt is blue, but there's a variation.

His blue is not the same as my blue. But with God, there is no variation. He doesn't change.

He is the same. And there is no shadow of turning with God. And of course, the problem with any kind of natural light is that it casts a shadow.

The lights in this building are not very great. And in fact, you'll see that one of those lights is casting a shadow with that light against the wall. And so even though it's a light, that light is casting a shadow.

And we say, well, that shouldn't be, a light shouldn't cast a shadow, but earthly lights do cast shadows. Even the sun casts a shadow, even though it's so powerful and so bright. But you know, with God, there is no shadow of turning.

When you see God from this side, not that God has sides, but when you see God from this side, and you see God from another side, it's the same. There is no shadow. When you look at a man, we all cast shadows.

We have a bright side and we have a dark side, physically and emotionally. But God is the same. There is no variation with Him.

When you go to Nigeria, my thoughts are very much with Jewel and David and Brother Malcolm that we're sponsoring right now, they're flying right at this moment to Ghana to the conference up there, and I wish I could be with them. But when you go to some of those Western African countries, they all have electricity. But there's a lot of variation.

The lights go bright and dim all the time, depending on what's happening in the circuit. Now God's not like that. There is no variation with God.

There is no shadow of turning with God. God is the same all the time. And so James is contrasting us with God, and he's saying, we need to be like God.

We shouldn't be double-minded. We shouldn't be changing. We shouldn't be like the wave of the sea.

We should be like God, who is the same, who changes not. Then in chapter 1 and verse 19. And again, I gave a long list of all of these contrasts this morning, and I'm just taking a few very important ones.

In verse 19 he says, So then, my beloved brethren, let every one of you be swift to hear and slow to speak and slow to wrath. Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. There's that contrast between fast and slow.

Now the problem is that we're the wrong way around. We're quick to speak. We're slow to hear.

We're quick to lose our temper. But he says, no, in fact, we should be the other way around. We should be quick to hear.

Wasn't that the thing that defined the men of God right through the Scriptures? Didn't Samuel say, speak, Lord. Your servant is hearing, is listening. Solomon asked, we say he asked for wisdom, but literally what he said is, Lord, give me a hearing heart.

Give me a hearing heart because that brings wisdom. Let me hear. Let me be slow to speak.

Let me be slow to anger. And that is a sign of maturity. And when you're young, you speak.

When you get older, you realize, let me not speak so much because I say stupid things. You remember the book of Proverbs? When we worked through Proverbs, one of the very wise sayings, and of course, James is the New Testament version of the book of Proverbs. But the book of Proverbs speaks about those who shouldn't speak because the moment they open their mouths, you realize that they're fools.

While they keep quiet, you don't know that they're stupid. But the moment they speak there, and so James is saying, yeah, don't speak too quickly. Then in chapter 1 verse 22, he speaks about being doers of the word and not hearers only.

Doers of the word and not hearers only. And you know that this is a theme that I keep coming back to over and over and over. That there needs to be a harmony between what I do and what I hear.

What I hear and what I do shouldn't be two different things. What we hear on a Sunday morning is what we should be doing on Monday morning. What I should be doing through the rest of the week.

And you know, the wonderful thing about new Christians is often their zeal of just being obedient to the word of God. Of seeing the word says, I must do this, saying, well, let me go and do that. And then coming back to the word and reading and saying, oh, I'm supposed to be doing this.

Let me go and do that. Let me just be obedient. Let me put into practice between what I hear and what I do.

And you know, I think there would be a tremendous growth in ourselves and every one of us if we could just put into practice everything that we hear from the word of God. The problem is that we want to hear more. And of course, it's good.

It's just said that we need to be quick to hear. But the problem is that we often hear and we don't do. And one of the reasons why we want to hear the next message, and so we have all of these tapes and we spoke about that, touched on in a slightly different context last Sunday night, about the fact that we always have our minds and our ears filled with music and all sorts of stuff because we're trying to avoid the reality.

And one of the things is Christians, many times, Christians are always wanting to hear a new message. Many Christians play Christian tapes in their cars and so on. And that's good.

And of course, we provide some of those tapes and those CDs. But sometimes it's a problem because I'm always wanting to hear the new message because I want to avoid doing the last one. And so I'm wanting to hear and to hear and to hear.

But in fact, I'm not doing what I've heard. Now, what we're doing actually is we're heaping up for ourselves tremendous condemnation because I have great responsibility. Every time I hear a new message, I have responsibility to do what I've heard.

And so the more I hear, the more responsibility I have. And so maybe what we should do is not hear so much and maybe do a little bit more. And you know, you may remember a long time ago, I think it was about two years ago, I wrote an article.

In fact, I just very recently got a very negative feedback on that article. Someone wrote and said, you know, this is heresy. Because the title of the article was Stop the Preaching.

Stop the Preaching. And I was saying that we're preaching all the time. But in fact, we haven't even begun to do what God told us two years ago to do.

But we want to hear the next message. We want to hear the new message. And you know, I think that any of us in this church, and I don't know about other churches, but I know any of us, including myself, that we could spend the rest of our lives just doing what we hear in six months in this church.

That's enough of a to-do list for the rest of our lives. And I think that as Christians, and I really believe this, that if you in this church never heard another message, if I never preached another message, and we spent the rest of our lives just doing what has been preached in the last three years, we would be tremendous Christians. And so we need to be--and I'm not preaching, I'm preaching on myself.

We need to learn to do. Not just to hear. Because in hearing, there is no great blessing.

But it's in doing. It's putting into practice what we hear the Word of God say. And so there needs to be this unity, this oneness, this peace, one peace, this integrity between what I hear and between what I do.

In chapter 2 and verse 1, he speaks about partiality. And I'm just picking out different things from here. And maybe I'm doing a little bit like I shared this morning.

The book of James is based on a Hebrew style of preaching. And not all rabbis taught this way, but many of them did. And that is, and particularly the older ones, they would really just talk what is on their heart.

Every word is a nugget of treasure. It's a word of wisdom. But there's no theme.

He's just going from one subject to the other. And he's just expressing his heart, just expressing the things that are heavy on his heart. And that's why you find it hard to analyze the book and to say, well, here's the theme, he's developed this, now he's moving to the next theme, he's developing that.

We see that very clearly in the book of Romans, but you don't see that here in the book of James. And so it's a little bit all over the place. And yet there is this common theme.

And the common theme is that we must not be double-minded. And so he's jumping to, and I'm just jumping with him, and he is saying that there should not be partiality in our meeting together. When we meet people, how do we treat them? Well, we treat rich people one way, we treat poor people the other way.

If somebody comes from a respectable neighborhood or a respectable ethnic group, we treat them one way. If they come from a bad neighborhood, we treat them in a different way. If they're well-dressed, we treat them one way.

If they're not well-dressed, we treat them in another way. And so the way that we see people determines how we're going to treat them. And unfortunately, we do that in the church sometimes.

And so somebody comes in with a suit and a fancy tie and drives a Bentley. We say, brother, come, sit up here. We'll appoint him to the board.

But you know, if a man comes in and he's unwashed and he's poor, we say, well, you know, you need to sit over there. And James is saying, you have these two standards. One for those who are rich and one for those who are poor.

We should be treating everyone the same. Because it's not whether... And in fact, he goes on to explain, and he says, you know, you elevate the rich, but in fact, who are the people who rob you, who cheat you? It's the rich, not the poor. And so when people come into the church, and I believe that God has been doing a work in this church, and I trust that He will continue to do that, that we show no partiality.

It doesn't matter what their race is. It doesn't matter what their background is. It doesn't matter what color they are.

It doesn't matter how much money they have or don't have. But that we receive everyone equally. That we love everyone equally.

Because everyone is a soul that is precious in the sight of God. And so God needs to forgive us because we live in a society, we grow up with our prejudices against these kinds of people, against that race group, against... And unfortunately, we understand that many of these stereotypes are real. They are based on reality.

And when you drive in certain parts of the city, and you see certain kinds of motor cars, and certain kinds of individuals behind those steering wheels, you know to expect a certain kind of behavior. But you know, when it comes to the church, when it comes to the message of the gospel, let's not be partial. Let's not treat people differently because they are different to us.

And so let's be the same. God has no partiality. God does not treat religious people better than non-religious.

Bigger sinners than smaller sinners. All are equal in His sight. And so God give us grace that we may be the same.

Chapter 2 verse 12. He speaks about speaking and doing. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Now remember, He spoke about hearing and doing, but now He's speaking about speaking and doing. And you know one of my favorite sayings. Talk is cheap.

Talk is cheap. It's easy to talk. The talk.

It's hard to walk the walk. It's easy to talk about the things of God. It's easy to say that we love Him.

It's easy to say that we're going to serve Him with all our hearts. It's easy to talk about all of these things. It's another thing to do them.

And so He is saying, don't just talk. Do. You know, there are some people, and while we don't want to show partiality, there are certain people who tell me certain things, and I don't even listen anymore.

Because I know. It's just talk. It's meaningless.

Nothing's going to happen. In fact, there are some people who make an appointment with me, I don't even put it in my diary. Because I know they won't be there.

Folks, what we speak and what we do should be the same thing. And we used to have a saying, and I think you have a similar saying, my word is my bond. I'm bound by my word.

God is bound by His word. And I praise God for that. That's what gives me security and stability and assurance in my faith, because I know that what God has said, He's going to do.

Every word in every detail. If it wasn't for that fact, I wouldn't be a preacher today. I wouldn't be preaching this word of God.

But I preach it because I know, and I have absolute 100% assurance, that God will perform His word. But now He's saying we need to be the same. We should be those people who, when we say something, even if it's going to be hard, we will deliver on our promises.

And you know there's some things that we... That's just part of our culture. You must come and visit me sometime. We must have a meal together sometime.

What does that mean? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. I'll pray for you.

What does that mean? Not very much. Maybe I'm cynical, but this is the reality. How many times have you and I made promises to people and said, We'll pray for you, and we've done it.

You know, one of the frustrating things I find, and I'm just speaking my heart this morning, but one of the frustrating things I find here in Burbank is the phone rings, and somebody asks about the time of the service, and they say, We'll be there. And you know, I know. Forget about it.

We'll never see them. Maybe one out of ten phone calls, maybe one out of twenty people who call and say, We'll be there on Sunday, actually arrive on Sunday. And they say, Are they Christians? James is saying, No.

What I speak is what I do. And remember the book of Psalms, David says, He says, This is the man who will dwell with God. He who swears to his hurt and performs it.

In other words, a man who makes a promise. And even though that promise is hard for him to do, you know, and it's easy for us to make promises. We say, Well, you know, I'll do this.

And then when push comes to shove, I realize, but you know, this is hard for me to do. It's inconvenient. I have to give up something else, or I have to, whatever it is.

You know, I said I would help you, but I have other things to do. But he says, This is the man who will dwell in God's presence. The man who swears to his hurt and performs it.

In other words, you make a promise. Afterwards, you realize that it's going to cost me more than I bargained to deliver on this promise. But you say, I gave my word, and I will deliver.

It doesn't matter what the cost. I will do what I said I will do. And we're going to come back to this in a moment because he picks that up in a moment.

Chapter 2, verse 14. And here he speaks about faith and works. And this, of course, is one of the well-known passages of the book.

You say you have faith. Well, prove it. That's really what he is saying.

Prove it. How do we prove faith? Faith is one of those intangibles. Faith is a spiritual thing.

You can't take faith and put it in a box and say, Well, here's faith. You can't take a photograph of faith and show you, Here's my faith. But James is saying, You can show faith.

You can show it by the way that you live. You can show it by the way that you live. You can show it by the things that you do.

How do we know Abraham had faith? We have no doubt that Abraham had faith. How do we know it? Because he left his home, and he went and lived in a tent in a far country for 75 years. He proved his faith.

He took his only son and tied him up on that altar and raised the knife. God said, He has faith. You see, his faith translated into actions.

And that's what James is saying. He's saying, It's no good saying, I believe. But you act as though you don't believe.

I don't know if I shared the story with you, but I used to paraglide, and I had great fun on the mountainside because there would be a lot of people paragliding and waiting for the wind. You have to wait for the wind to be right before you can fly. And so you spend a lot of time just waiting for the right conditions.

And so the guys sit on the side of the mountain, and they just talk nonsense. And we'd have a lot of time to talk. And we'd talk about faith.

Because I was with a few Christians, and we'd talk about faith. And you know, many people would come and look at people paragliding, probably hoping to see somebody crash. But they'd come, and you'd say, Well, do you believe this thing flies? And they'd say, Yeah, we believe.

And you'd explain to them how it works. And they'd say, Well, how does it work? And you'd explain how it works. You'd explain how the air moves over the aerofoil and that you have low pressure at the top, high pressure at the bottom.

That picks the whole thing up. That makes the thing work. We understand that.

We believe it. You'd say, Well, come, let me put you in this. Let me strap you in, and you fly.

No, no, no, no. Did they believe? No, they didn't believe. Because if they believed, they would strap in, and they would jump off the mountain.

You see, it's one thing to say, I believe. It's another thing to actually do it, to actually put yourself in the hands of that piece of plastic. Many people say, Well, we believe God.

We trust God. We have faith. But you know what? They won't let go of the things that they cling to for their security and throw themselves upon Him and His grace and His mercy entirely.

And that applies to every area of our lives. And so you say, Well, preacher, I believe. Well, prove it and let go of the things that you're holding on to for your security and hold on to Jesus and to Him alone.

That will prove your faith. You know, there are many, many areas in our lives where we say we believe. But in fact, our actions prove that we don't believe.

And so our faith needs to translate into works. In chapter 3 in verse 8, He speaks about the tongue. And it says in verse 9, With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in

the similitude or the likeness of God.

Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be. Does a spring scent for fresh water and bitter at the same time.

How can we bless God and curse people? Out of the same mouth. You know, to us, that's so commonplace. It's just so acceptable.

That's just what happens. We'll come to the meeting. We'll sing these wonderful songs and hymns of praise and of worship and we'll bless God and we'll leave the meeting and we curse our husband or our wife or our children.

We say words that bless God and we say words that hurt one another. He says, how's that? What is in the heart is going to come out. And how can good and bad come out of the same heart? And so really what needs to happen is we need to be people of one peace.

That my mouth should speak the blessing of God, whether it's God or man that I'm speaking to. That what I'm saying should be for the good of everybody around, not just for myself. And so again, this unity that needs to come between what I say in the church, out of the church, what I say to God, what I say to people.

And then in chapter 5 and verse 12, and I'm drawing to a close, above all, my brethren, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no no, lest you fall into judgment. Now, he's talking about a practical thing here and I'm going to apply it in a spiritual way. He's talking about literally taking an oath when you go to court and you have to say, I swear to speak the whole truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Put your hand on the Bible or whatever you do. He says, you shouldn't be doing that because you should be speaking the truth all the time. But the spiritual application of this is that when I say yes, it must mean yes.

Now, we spoke earlier about what I say and what I do. But there's a slightly different thing that he's dealing with here and I want to apply it this way. How many times do we sit in the service and we say, yes God, I hear your word.

I'm going to do this thing. I'm going to stop doing this or I'm going to do whatever it is that God, we say yes to the Lord. But the moment we get outside these doors, our yes turns to no.

Our yes turns to no. Yes Lord, I'm going to change. Yes Lord, I'm going to do this.

Yes Lord, I'm going to stop doing that. And I get outside and I say, no. Now he says, let my yes be yes.

If you make a promise to God, and folk, you know my story. I've told this many, many times. I no longer invite people to this altar because I believe more lies are told in front of any altar than anywhere else.

People come here and they say, yes God, I'm going to change. I'm going to give you my life. Lord, I'm going to be faithful.

Lord, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. And yet the moment we leave the sanctuary, the yes has turned to no. He says, no, my yes needs to be my yes.

And I've emphasized this, and I'm going to emphasize it again this morning. Don't make like promises to God. I want you to make promises to God.

I want you to go away from here and say, Lord, I'm going to be the man you want me to be. I'm going to be the woman you want me to be. But only make that promise if you intend to deliver on that promise.

If your yes is going to be yes, and if your no is going to be your no. If you've been convicted by something this morning and you say, God, I'm going to stop doing this thing. I'm going to say no to this temptation.

I'm going to say no to this weakness. I'm going to say no to this whatever it is. If that is your no, then let your no be your no.

Don't change it into yes. Just because the tempter has come your way. So let our yes be yes and our no, no.

Now, finally, chapter 4 and verse 8, the same word comes back, and he says, draw near to God. Chapter 4 verse 8, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

So what do we need to do? If there is double-mindedness in us, if we have two hearts, two souls, and you've recognized that in yourself this morning, you need to cleanse your heart. You need to say, Lord, I have these two sets of emotions, two values, two everything. Lord, please cleanse me.

Purify me. Make me of one piece. Lord, help me to be, in that computer term, whizzy-weak.

What you see is what you get. Lord, help me to be the same here in this sanctuary and in your presence as I am in my work, as I am with my family, as I am with my friends. That there may not be these ups and downs, these disparities, these differences, but there may be one complete man just like you are, the same yesterday, today, forever.

Father, thank you for your Word. And Lord, we have these hard words sometimes, and the book of James, Lord, we can admit is a hard word because it requires of us to do certain things, to stop doing other things, to change. And Lord, we don't like change because we do the things we do, Lord, because they just come naturally to us.

But Lord, we understand again this morning that you're trying to change us, and you're trying to make us like you. You want us to be stable. You want us to be unchanging, unswerving, incorruptible like you.

Lord, forgive us for being so fickle, for loving you one moment and loving the world the next. But Lord, help us to be stable, dependable, reliable. And Lord, help us to experience the change that Peter did because, Lord, Peter was like this.

Peter was up and down, one moment saying he'll never deny you, and the very next moment cursing and saying, I don't know the man. And yet, Father, you were able to change Peter, and he became that rock that doesn't change and who confessed you even though he was killed for that faith. Help us, Lord, to experience the same change that Peter experienced.

Bring that stability into our hearts and into our lives, into our families, into our church, into every area of our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name. Lord, we confess we cannot change ourselves.

We need you to help us. Help us, Lord, to make promises this morning that we intend to keep. Give us grace, Lord, to do and fulfill that which we promise to you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Pray that you'd part us with your blessing. Grant that your Spirit would continue to teach us and to lead us and, above all, to empower us to be the people you want us to be.

Bring us together again this evening, we pray, in Jesus' name. We pray for Cindy, Lord, who's going back to New Jersey. We pray that you'd protect her as she travels this week.

Give her a good flight home. Bless her, Lord, as she has blessed us in the music. Help her, Lord, with the sale of her house and with all of the difficult trauma of moving and relocating.

We pray that you'd be with her in every area of her life. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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