

Testing & Temptation

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[0 : 00] All right, thank you, Alex, and a fine good morning to everyone. My name is Elliot. I'm one of the pastors here. So good to be with you this morning here at One Harbor.

So for everyone here and listening online, pray this finds you well. And so if you're new to us, kind of our bread and butter here, what we do is we go through books of the Bible, and we're actually starting a new series this morning.

So if you've been with us, we've been going through the book of Mark. We've actually done 35 sermons in the book of Mark, if you're counting. And we've got one left, and we're going to do that on Easter.

So, you know, stay tuned for the dramatic conclusion of Mark, right? But today we're going to move forward into a new series from the book of James. And so James is a really interesting and unique book in the New Testament, written by the half brother of Jesus, the biological half-brother of Jesus, who was kind of an early leader in the church at Jerusalem.

And what's interesting is this book is quite possibly one of the earliest letters we have in the New Testament. Like it was likely written by the end of the early 40s, like not 1940s, like 40s, right?

[1 : 17] And probably within about 15 years of the crucifixion. So what you get when you're reading this book is kind of a peek into what some of the earliest Christians were wrestling with, how they were fleshing out their walk with Jesus and how they were unpacking it.

Now the problem is, James is a bit difficult to classify as a letter because it doesn't really read like anything else we've got in the New Testament. On the one hand, it kind of reads like a sermon or like sermon notes.

On another hand, it reads a lot like if you've ever read the book of Proverbs, it seems to like just be these pithy wisdom statements that jump around and maybe don't connect from verse to verse. And so it becomes kind of difficult when you just sit down to read it the first time to figure out what is the theme of this book? And because of that, I would say that's led to some really bad ways to read James over the years.

As a matter of fact, the reformer Martin Luther, when he was kind of unpacking, you know, the beauty of salvation by grace through faith, every time he got to James, he was like, I don't know what to do with that book.

[2 : 31] I don't like it. Go away. But if you approach James kind of as it is, like instead of trying to fit it in some other mold and you look at it like this one of a kind wisdom document, you start to realize that it's actually really beautiful because it reads a lot more like a father or a mother, like a parent giving wisdom to their children.

And as a matter of fact, you can see that in how the letter opens. So James 1, 1 opens like this, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes in the dispersion, greetings. So unlike Paul's letters where he typically addresses a specific church, this letter doesn't open like that. It's kind of an open letter to all Messianic Jews, like all Jews who are believers in Jesus across the world at that time.

And the language here is really interesting because he says, to the 12 tribes. Now to the Jewish listeners, the people who would have heard this letter, that immediately would have stirred up the imagery in their mind of the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 sons of Jacob.

And the English masks this a little bit here, but James is actually just an English version of the name Jacob. So this is literally reads like father Jacob speaking to the 12 sons of Jacob.

[4 : 03] So it's the tone is like this fatherly wisdom coming to his children. And in wisdom literature in scripture, what it's really trying to do is help you understand how to live rightly in the world.

It's how to take what you believe and work it out in a practical way in everyday living. And because of that, this letter is actually more immersed in the teachings of Jesus than probably any other in the New Testament.

And what I mean by that is if you look through James, you will see almost every line of the Sermon on the Mount echoed in James. And his real focus is the wisdom that you need to live as a follower of God.

And so we've called this series Wisdom for God's People because the expectation and the hope is that we will grow closer to him. We will gain the wisdom we need and we'll know how to live practically in it.

Okay. So with that, let's, let's dig right in. James chapter one, starting with verse two, James comes in hot. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

[5 : 16] For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

That person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Now let the lowly brother boast in his exultation and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and it withers the grass, its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also the rich man will fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. And let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

[6 : 34] But each person is tempted when he is lured away and enticed by his own desire. And then the desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of change. Of his own will he brought forth us by the word of his truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. This is God's word to us.

Now, like a lot of the book of James, you can kind of see from this first passage, it seems a little bit rambly, right? Like it jumps around paragraph to paragraph, and it's not immediately apparent what each section has to do with the one that came before it.

But I do think this passage actually has a coherent theme to it. And so before we're going to launch into the sermon, I'm kind of going to give you the cliff notes up front, which I think will help unpack it, okay?

[7 : 40] So basically, if you were going to summarize what James is trying to say, it's basically this. Number one, you're going to be tested. You don't get any choice in that.

But that testing is for your good, and you're going to be thrilled with the results of it. God is going to make you into something special.

But to pass the test, you're going to need some wisdom, and you have to ask God for it. But when you ask, you have to be all in on it, because you can't have two minds and approach God like that. But if you face the test, and you remain steadfast, there is great blessing and reward in that. And in the meantime, don't forget that there is a difference between testing and temptation.

Because under pressure, you might give in to that temptation. But at the end of it all, God is not out to get you. He will not tempt you.

[8 : 45] He is always good. And he is always bringing new life out of you to make you truly a marvel. So that's a lot to digest.

But if we follow that flow, and if that interpretation is correct at all, then I think as a minimum, the first thing we can say is this. According to James, God's tests are a gift.

So James is going to open this letter by challenging our perspective about suffering. And he's going to do it in two very specific ways. The first is, he doesn't talk about suffering in some generic way, right?

Matter of fact, he doesn't even use the word suffering at all. He uses the word test. And I would submit to you, that slight change can make all the difference in your perspective.

Because if you're taking a test, it seems somewhat less arbitrary. It feels like you have some agency in that. Like, maybe the way to think about it is, there's a world of difference in the suffering that comes from, say, when you get the stomach flu, right?

[9 : 50] And it's just like, there's this period where you lay there and you wish life was over, right? And you just kind of suffer through it. And you're like, why is this here? I don't understand. All I can think about is the pain.

You just kind of grin and bear it, right? Like, there's a difference between that kind of suffering and the kind of suffering that comes that when you are preparing for a big exam in college, when you're going through the studying, or when you're preparing yourself on the athletic field to get ready for a big game, right?

Like, there is a grind to that. There is a test to that. But you know it's accomplishing something. And while you may not like the practice or you may not like the studying, the suffering that comes with that feels different because you know there's some inherent value in it, right?

Like, it's not just grin and bear it. You know it's not meaningless. It's accomplishing something. And that's what James is saying here, that every moment has meaning in your life because God is watching it.

Like, nothing is just a meaningless suffering to you. And because of that, the second thing he says is that you can actually count it all joy when you suffer trials in your life.

[11 : 03] Now, an important point to make before we go any farther is that in wisdom literature in the Bible particularly, and really in the Bible in general, the Bible gives you a lot of perspectives about how to face a situation.

And that's important to know because there are absolutely places in the Bible where it says, when something bad or something tragic or something heartbreaking happens to you, it is absolutely appropriate to grieve, to lament, to feel that.

Verses like this one in James are not here to counsel you to just put on a happy face and never feel pain. That's not what James is trying to do. But he does have a different perspective on going through suffering that he's highlighting here.

And this perspective looks a lot more like when Jesus says on the Sermon on the Mount, he tells his followers, you know, blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and say evil things about you.

You should rejoice when that happens because great is your reward in heaven. And James is kind of taking that same angle here. He's not saying that you are supposed to be happy in your suffering, but he does say you should, when you're suffering, look through it to the other side and consider what God might be doing in it.

[12 : 23] You should look through to what that suffering is producing in you, and that will produce a joy in your life that's different than just grin and bear it. And I think most of us can actually relate to that on some level.

Like if I asked for a show of hands, I would imagine in a room like this, there are many of you that have some part of your story that goes like this. There's this part of my story, my life story, that I would not live again for anything, and I would not wish it on anyone.

But I probably wouldn't trade it for anything either, because I know what it made me into. It's an experience that I wouldn't trade for the world.

We don't long for suffering, but we do welcome what it brings into our lives. And James actually gives you a very specific outcome that you're looking for, and that's this word that's translated steadfastness, which leads to perfection and completion.

Now this word that is translated steadfastness, it really has this active element to it, right? Like it really doesn't mean, again, just to sit back and take something.

[13 : 37] It means to stand. It actually has a modifier on it that kind of means hyperstanding. It's kind of the image of doing commonplace and mundane things in difficult and terrible circumstances.

I mean, maybe the closest I can get to it in sort of modern parlance is, so when the Second World War was starting, and the United Kingdom was bearing kind of the brunt of that, the British Ministry of Information came up with these various little slogans and flyers they intended to pass out to help people get through that.

And one of them kind of made it into modern times. You might have seen it. It says, Keep calm and carry on. And the whole idea of it was, when something really difficult like a bombing or like this war or like the trials come, it's an encouragement to have steadfastness.

Keep doing the routine things in life. Keep persevering forward even in the difficulty of it. And that's kind of the idea of hyperstanding, that like when everything is falling apart, you've got a quality based in the Lord where you can continue to do the mundane and the right things in life and not cut corners.

And James says, You're going to need that because you need it to become perfect and complete. Now, perfect's another kind of difficult word here because in English, when you say perfect, typically we mean flawless.

[15:13] It's about something that's missing. You are missing any hint of error. Perfect means errorless. But it almost never means that in the Greek Bible.

When you see that word perfect, and we know that actually even in James because two chapters later in James 3, he's going to say, We all stumble in many ways.

The word translated perfect here has a connotation that I think in our modern speak would sound more like mature. Like you are becoming more and more every day the thing that God made you to be.

You're stepping more into that. So James is saying, When the tests come, you don't have to despair. You can count that all joy because you know that God is making you into something spectacular.

And yes, there is heat, and there is pressure, and there is suffering. It's like, again, this image of you throwing precious metals into a fire, and everything that is not precious can't withstand it.

[16:16] It gets burned away, right? And there's a certain suffering to that, right? But what's getting burned out are things like immaturity, cowardice, laziness, self-pity.

All of that is going away. And it's not just for something God wants for himself. It is actually something he's doing for you. Look, I think this is an important point.

Part of this is God is trying to make you into the person that you always hoped you would be.

Big-hearted, brave, courageous. Like that impulse in you to want to do the right thing at the right time is not all just self-glory.

God has a plan for that. But to do that requires testing. It requires refining. I actually think we kind of get this a little bit more intuitively in our local community than some might because we have so many members of the armed services with us, right?

And, you know, everybody in here kind of understands you don't get to be a Marine by sitting on your rear end, right? In the same way, you don't get to be righteous by sitting on your rear end.

[17:28] If you want to be a sage, a hero of the faith, a saint, a trophy of grace, an oak of righteousness, whatever metaphor from Scripture you gravitate towards, it cannot happen without adversity.

There is no easy holiness. There is no easy way to develop your character. It has to be tested.

Amen? Still want to read James?

All right. So if you do, if you do want to have what you need when you face the test, James actually gives you a couple of things that will be helpful that you'll need along the way to pass it.

And the first is this. He says, To pass the test, you will need wisdom from God. And James gives us a very simple charge to acquire it.

He says, If you lack wisdom, ask for it. Don't assume you are wise and you know how to get through this.

[18:31] Ask God for the wisdom. Because if you don't, if you don't have God's wisdom for the test, you'll misread the moment. Like it is the easiest thing in the world to misread the suffering or the trials that are going on in your life.

And there's a couple different ways you'll go with that that are unhealthy. One is you'll just fall right into anger, right? Why is this happening to me? Why am I the one that has to suffer this?

And you'll go in all kinds of, you know, you'll fill up with that anger. And then you'll jump on and make a tick-tock about how life is so unfair, right? Like that's, that's the direction you'll go. So, the other thing that might happen though is you might despair.

Like you might just become so overwhelmed with the suffering in life, the day-to-day grind, that you lose any kind of vision or hope for the future or have any ability to see what's actually happening.

And that's equally as bad if not worse. You need wisdom and that wisdom, James says, doesn't come from like your gut or from your life experiences.

[19 : 42] It says God is the only one that can give you that proper perspective and you have to ask for it. The good news is he's eager to give it. It says he is eager to give you that, but he does put this qualification on it.

He says, you have to ask for it in faith. And this is actually one of the more difficult things to interpret in this passage in James.

So, for a couple of contextual reasons, I don't think when he says you have to ask in faith with no shadow of doubt, that can mean you can't have any shred of intellectual questions, no anxiousness at all.

Because, first, if you look at just how this book is unfolding, it's really focusing on the idea of not so much, again, what you're thinking or feeling, but how that's practically being applied.

So, contextually, it doesn't make a ton of sense. But I would say even more convincingly, the rest of the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, make it very clear that honest questions and suffering are part of the human experience.

[20 : 51] And the Bible is full of people expressing their doubts and their concerns and their frustrations to God, particularly in the Psalms. Like, you see people crying out, what are you doing? Why is it going like this? Where are you? Why did you allow that? Like, all of that kind of stuff is part of our interaction with the Father. So, if it's not that kind of doubt, like, what is James really getting to?

And the good news is he kind of explains himself. He gives an example. He says, The person who doubts is like a wave tossed on the sea. He's a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The word double-minded there means two-minded, two-faced, a hypocrite. It's a picture of someone who says they have faith, but it does not manifest in any discernible action in their life.

And that's actually going to be a theme that becomes a big one later in the letter of James. And so, the doubter isn't so much this person that has a cognitive question or an emotional anxiety as much as the person who actually lives like a wave on the sea.

[22 : 04] You never know which way they're going to. Their faith isn't consistently matched with any kind of virtuous action. It's saying you are a follower of Jesus, but largely living like you don't.

That's not honest doubt. That's just duplicity. And it shows, I think it also kind of shows why the kind of wisdom you need isn't just some head knowledge to know what to do.

I think this actually shows up a lot in kind of contemporary music that has to do with romantic relationships. So, like, think of all our modern love songs. And if you kind of cull through those, and just so you know, I am not picking, unless you think I'm picking on a genre, like I have seen this theme in country music, in R&B;, in hip-hop, in contemporary pop.

Like, it's all over the place. But let me know, have you ever heard a song on the radio that has lyrics that goes something like this? I know that girl is poison.

She's crazy. But she's also fine. So I'm going to go ahead and do that anyway. Or, I know that guy is a bad idea.

[23 : 19] Like, that is a heartbreak waiting to happen. But I just can't not. And we resonate with that because that's the kind of mistakes we make in life.

Like, we know this relationship is a bad idea. We know that use of my money is a bad idea. We know it is a bad idea to send that email.

But we do it anyway. Which means whatever wisdom you're using is powerless to stop you from falling into the thing.

Right? And that's what James is getting at here. Jesus actually used the illustration when he's talking about the kind of wisdom you need. He said, there are people who build their house on a strong foundation on a rock.

And that rock is me. And then there are people who build their house on the sand. Which is every other wisdom and philosophy and thought that is not Jesus. And he says, if you build it on the rock, you're going to be safe.

[24 : 18] And if you build it on the sand, the house is going to fall apart. And here's the catch. You can't build half the house on the rock and half the house on the sand. If you build half a house on the sand, you might as well have built the whole house on the sand.

Because it's still going to fail. That kind of wisdom can't work in you to accomplish what God is going to do. And that's actually...

So in between there, there's a little snippet that doesn't seem like it fits. And we're not going to talk about it a lot today because we'll hit it in future sermons. But if you're curious why it switches gears into this discourse on the rich and the poor, it's really kind of that same idea.

Right? Like the cliff notes is... It basically says in there, so if you're poor, you need wisdom that comes from above to understand your poverty rightly.

To understand what you actually have in Christ. And if you're rich, you need wisdom that comes from above to see your riches properly. To be thoughtful and humble in how you manage that.

[25 : 25] Lest God do it for you. So that's a lot to take in. God is going to test you. Think soberly about it.

Be ready for it. And then the passage gives us a few final pieces of wisdom that are really crucial when you face trials. It tells us that God is going to test you.

But when you're tested, something else might happen. You might be tempted. And so when you are tested, you need to make sure you know the difference between testing and tempting.

When you're tested, Satan will come to tempt you to destroy you. God is testing you to refine you. Satan is tempting you to destroy you. And the trick is, both feel painful at the time. And sometimes testing and tempting feel very similar to each other when they're happening.

[26 : 30] And again, that's one of the difficult interpretive challenges here in James is to like tease out what is the difference? Like how do you know the difference in testing and tempting? God is testing you for your good.

But in that testing, there is a danger that you will give in to the temptation that Satan uses that opportunity to bring about. And it's mainly because you have desires in you that God is working out that are currently pointed in the wrong direction.

Like the metaphor given in the scripture is something related to like fishing or catching animals, right? Like there's something in you that is constantly like a lure dangling over here that you're just tempted to reach out and grab.

And then it gives this really sober thought that says, if you give in to that temptation, it gives birth to sin. And sin brings forth death.

It actually begets death. Now this is a really hard saying actually, but I think there's two things we really have to take in about testing and tempting.

[27 : 36] And the first one is simply this. Your sins are killing you. Your small ones are killing you.

They are killing everything beautiful in your life. And we don't look at it that way. We rationalize.

We justify. They're not that big a deal. They're not hurting us. C.S. Lewis wrote this fictional book called *The Screwtape Letters*.

And in it, what he tries to do is tease out conversations between like a senior demon and a younger demon, like a junior demon, right?

And really what he's trying to do in the book, it's kind of brilliant, is show you the things, the thought processes that pull you away from following the Lord. And there's this one section talking about how to tempt somebody where the senior demon says to the lower one, Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one, the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, no milestones, no signposts.

[28 : 51] And that is the perfect imagery of how sin works. Sin is actually a term. It's almost like an archery term. It means to miss the mark, right?

And so like if you could imagine if I'm shooting an arrow at a target in front of me and it's, you know, maybe at the back of this sanctuary like 50 feet away or something. You know, if you shoot it and you know where the bullseye is and you miss like just way, way off.

Everybody can see that, right? Everybody's like, man, you're way off the target. But if you miss the target by just a little bit, the first temptation is to go, well, that's pretty good. Like I only missed it by a little bit.

And that is true. Like this is a world of difference from this. But if you miss it by a little bit, what does that look like 100 yards from now and 200 yards from now and a mile from now?

If you don't correct that missing the mark, you wind up a long, long way from where you thought you would ever be. And that's how the road to temptation feels.

[29 : 57] It feels comfortable, easy. No signpost to say you got to stop right now. Like the big one is often a blessing because it's a signpost that tells you you really messed it up and you got to get that fixed.

Missing the target small, the gentle slope makes it so much more difficult. And maybe you're thinking, man, that sounds really dramatic, okay, right?

Like that whole slippery slope thing. But I would submit to you, if you want to know why in the world there are all kinds of stories of great men and great women who have done great things, both in the world and even in the church, who then go on to commit unspeakable acts of evil, who take money, who abuse people.

Nobody really sets out to become a monster. You get there slowly, most of the time. And so what are we supposed to do about it?

And what Scripture gives us sounds even more impossible. It basically says, say no to sin every time. Give it no quarter.

[31 : 12] Make no compromises. Don't let that seed germinate in you. I've reached the unfortunate age, kind of middle age, where that involves getting poked and prodded by a lot of medical people every couple years, right?

To determine if there's anything bad going on inside of me. And I can go ahead and tell you, none of that I look forward to. Like I am not excited about medical procedures to examine me, to see what's going on.

But the reason you do it is because you want to know, is there something growing inside of me? Is there some disease? Is there something wrong inside of me that right now is small but one day might not be?

Because that's the thing. When it's small, you need a specialist to see it, right? Like you can have something really bad inside your body that's small enough that it's not really affecting your life in any way that you can see or anybody else can see.

But if you don't deal with it, the day will come when everything in your life will be dominated by that thing. And so, okay, give sin no quarter.

[32 : 23] How am I supposed to do that? Well, I think actually the best picture we get of that in Scripture is given in the Gospels where we see that Jesus actually had to resist temptation just like us.

So, if you look at the arc of Jesus' life, after he's baptized, he's immediately taken by God. Same thing we see here. God is going to test him.

The testing is from God. And it says God leads him into the wilderness and it is a tough time. Like it is an intense time of suffering. And it says it takes him out there to reveal what is in him.

Hebrews actually even says, and man, try to wrap your head around this. It tells us that Jesus, as a man, learned obedience from what he suffered. God takes him out there to test him.

But just like us, when he's being tested, Satan also shows up to tempt him. To encourage him to cut corners.

[33 : 23] To take what isn't his. To take the easy route. To indulge himself. And Jesus crushes it. Like he doesn't give in to temptation.

But in the way he does it, he gives us a clue to how you're going to do this in life. Because when he goes out, we learn that the words of Satan are not the only thing present in his life.

So, let's flash back to the chapter before when he gets baptized. Jesus gets baptized. And it says, when that happens, God's spirit descends onto him. And these words are spoken.

This is my son. And in him, I am well pleased. And so, Jesus goes into the wilderness with those words of his father ringing in his ears.

I am your son. The father is well pleased in me. And so, frankly, when Satan shows up, the temptations are severe.

[34 : 31] Don't get that wrong. Like these are, if you kind of unpack those, there are things that Jesus wanted. But Satan doesn't have a chance. Because Jesus is filled up with the blessing from his father.

The worst thing that can happen to us is not that you can suffer. It's that you take the bait. That you are lured and enticed in.

And you're going to need wisdom to understand what is bait and what is part of the test that God's doing. And so, you should pray for that. But when you fail, and you are going to fail, there's two

things that you really need to have in your mind.

One of them, we just talked about. The first temptation when you fail is going to be to minimize that sin. To say, it's no big deal. And to just carry on down the road.

We've already seen, don't do that. But the other temptation is going to be to maximize it. To think that because you gave in, you're done.

[35 : 37] Like you're finished. And that really leads us to kind of the, I would say, penultimate thing you're going to need. If you're going to pass the test, you're going to have to cling to Jesus.

So, it's really important that you hear the thing I just said. Like it is really important that you hear your sins are killing you. And you need to take them seriously.

It is even more important that you hear this. Your sins are not greater than God's grace. Your sins cannot overcome Jesus' blood.

And if you really want to throw like a knockout punch to temptation in your life. Like if you want to know, how do I really get better at this? It isn't just the set of your will. Like I will try harder and I will do better.

It is falling back into the gospel over and over. Because while your sin is never small, it is always forgivable. But Elliot, this is the 974th time I have committed this same sin.

[36 : 51] I mean, when I go back to Jesus, is he really going to forgive me? Yes. 975, 976, 977. His blood, his sacrifice, his grace is great enough for all of that.

There will always be mercy for the child who comes back. Those words of the Father, I am well pleased in you.

You can go out with that ringing in your ears just as Jesus did. Not because of anything you've done, but because Jesus did it. That's what the gospel is. It's the good news that you couldn't earn that, but he did and you get it now.

And when you know that, you can then get back to that hyper standing. You're not crushed by your sin because you know that Jesus has rendered it impossible for it to ultimately kill you.

You can get back in the fight. So when things get hard, you can go back to those basics. Feels like it doesn't matter, but you can pray. You can worship. You can immerse yourself in the scripture.

[38 : 00] You go to church. You serve others. You give of your finances. You do the little things when the world is falling apart because you know you have a good Father who sees you and loves you and it matters.

And if we do that, we become a testament to the image of Christ in this world. We start to look like disciples, little Jesuses in this world.

And that's the wisdom that can actually take us home. As the band comes up, a few ways that you can respond today.

So if you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, look, I know thinking about sin and what it does in our lives is not really a popular hobby in our day.

And I want you to know, like, while there is no desire in me, like, I don't get any kick out of, I'm not trying to make you feel guilty. I'm not trying to make you feel worse because you're not a follower of Jesus.

[39 : 03] I'm not trying to say anybody in this room is better than you. Like, none of that is in me. Matter of fact, my normal proclivity is to run away from saying that, right? But the clear testament of Scripture is your sin is killing you.

It is killing everything beautiful in your life. And if you don't deal with it, it is an acid that is going to eat away everything. But the good news of the gospel is it doesn't have to be that way.

Jesus has made a way that the power of sin can be broken in your life. The promise of the gospel is not that Jesus will help you do better, try harder.

It is that he will render you indestructible. He will carry you home. Your sin can no longer have power ultimately over you because Jesus has taken that.

Jesus has dealt with it. His blood is more powerful than your sin. And that means you can have another chance today. Whatever you've messed up, you can have another chance today and tomorrow and every day after until you stand in front of him.

[40 : 15] Your destiny from here on is not death. It is life. And if that is interesting to you at all, like if there's any part of you that wants that, we'd love to talk to you about it. We'll have a little prayer on the screen behind me.

You can pray that. If that expresses your heart, you can come talk to the men and women to the side of the stage afterwards if you want to do that. But don't feel like the things in your life that feel like monsters that you can't control.

Jesus is bigger than us. If you are a follower of Jesus, I would say, well, what do you need this morning? The Father's arms are open wide.

Do you need wisdom for something going on in your life? He says, ask. Ask. And he'll give it. And then just build your life on that.

You know, if your life is built on the rock, it doesn't matter if you're anxious about it or not. The rock is going to hold. Build your life on that wisdom. Maybe you feel like you need to get back to that hyper standing, right?

[41 : 17] Like you feel like you're just being carried around in life. Ask him for that. He never turns away his children. Whatever you need, his arms are open. We come now to a moment of communion.

And again, this is like we're so much in Christ. Like the reason we can stand is because he's made it possible. And this meal is just a special time to both remember it and invite him into that.

Jesus, help me to be found in you, to hyper stand. And so we're going to have a moment here just to examine yourself, to ask God any of those things that you think you need.

And then when you're ready, you can proceed to the tables around the sanctuary. Take that back to your seat. And eat in the joy of knowing that no matter what happens, I'm going to be found in Christ.

My destiny is life and beauty just as his is. Father, we thank you for these moments together. Holy Spirit, I would ask that you would just come during this time of communion.

[42 : 26] God, if there is any sin, if there is any place we've missed the mark, show that to us.

Open our hearts to receive it. Help us to feel whatever grief we need. And then let us submit that to you in turn, again and again, confident that you'll forgive, that you'll give us another day of grace.

Amen. Carry us home, Father. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.