

## James 25-04-06a

Greetings, welcome to the 6th of April 2025 congregation, conflagration, here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We continue this morning our study in the letter of Jacobas, known as James in your English Bible. We will be picking up and beginning our verse-by-verse study at verse 1. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin.

Father, you are our strength and our Redeemer. We're grateful for your watch care, your provision, your protection, your guidance, the promise of future hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him and his ongoing representation on our behalf at your right hand.

We thank you for the presence and ministry of your Holy Spirit to raise us above the mundane, the earthly and the temporal and to give us the perspective of eternity to enliven and enrich our understanding of your word in ways that make it possible for us to apply it and to live the life to which we have been called, a supernatural life, a life that is different and unique from that experienced by those who do not know you through the Lord Jesus. We pray that our testimony and our witness in our daily lives as we live and walk by faith will shine a light that attracts others to relationship with you, that benefits them, that blesses them by your presence within us. We pray that our study this morning will contribute to that goal, that each heart will be blessed, encouraged, strengthened and motivated.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Our passage as far as we have gotten is James.

It has taken us a little time. I personally am convinced I wouldn't die for it, I wouldn't stake my salvation on it, but I believe the author to be the younger son of Zebedee, John's brother. There are many unique facets to this letter, which we will point out as we go along, particularly when we get to the latter part of verse 1 about the 12 tribes, but we haven't gotten that far.

We have made it through James and we're now going to look at the Greek here, not so much because we're going to get a lesson in Greek or do a word study or vocabulary, simply the word order. If you look at your English Bible, what do you see? You see James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. That, however, is not the word order in the Greek text.

It is Yaakov of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave. The next word after James' name, identifying the author of the letter is Theos, God. It's a genitive, which means that God is going to, in this case, possess something.

This is of God, belonging to God, belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is your typical kurios Jesu Christu here in the genitive of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave. The identity of the possessors comes first.

There's a powerful lesson here for us. When we think of ourselves, some call it self-esteem, some call it our self-image, but how do we think of ourselves? What is our worth? What is our value? What is our standing? We typically think of those around us. As the Paul Simon song

used to say, my mama loves me.

Most people have a wonderful, beneficent, loving, and forgiving mother who loves us virtually unconditionally. So we think in terms of our family, does my family love me, respect me, value me, appreciate me, look out for me? We look at our friends or our co-workers, fellow students, or those in our social circle. Do they think well of us? Do they think ill of us? Are there those that we would have to classify as enemies who are out to get us, who resist us, who think there's something wrong with us? And the Lord Jesus talked about a time that would come when a man's enemies would be the members of his own household.

Because of division of that sword, what think ye of Christ? And to live for Christ, to be faithful and obedient in some cases is to be separated from those who do not share that heart and that appreciation for the Lord Jesus. All of these play into how we evaluate what we see in the mirror. Am I a good person? Do I do things that make me pleased with myself, satisfied with myself? Most people endeavor to find a way to justify what they do, what they think, what their opinions, attitudes, politics, emotional responses, and so on are.

How faithful and loyal are they to various issues or causes or principles? This makes up our identity. I want you to notice James here puts himself forward to a large group of those that fit a category but are personally strangers to him. He's writing to Jewish Christians and in many cases they will not have met him.

They don't know him. It's the foot he is putting forward to introduce himself and to establish his authority to deliver the message that will follow. They say you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Sometimes you can overcome the initial encounter that may not go as well as you hoped. Exposure over time reveals our character, our priorities, our values, our personality. We see sides and facets of people in different circumstances.

But how should we think of ourselves? James gives us a wonderful example of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first and foremost characteristic of James, he belongs to God and he belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is definitional.

It is essential. It is the core of who he is. And he doesn't just belong and notice the order to God first.

We come to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ and we are bond slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. A slave in a household that comes into that household by whatever means. There are interesting facts about slavery in the first century.

If you look at the population of the Roman Empire, in and around the time of Christ, 2,000 years ago, one out of every two persons was a slave. Half the population were slaves. So when someone uses slavery image, this is a commonplace.

This would be like using the word employee or employee. Employees are something extremely familiar. I'm a fireman.

I'm a veteran. I am something that immediately has a great connotation and realm of context in the minds and hearts of people. Half of the population are slaves.

Some of them were indentured and were working off debts. Most of them, the great majority, came into slavery through military conquest. It was involuntary.

We have some verses about slavery. We've seen to whom James finds himself attached, to whom he belongs. And this is how he sees himself.

And this is how he presents himself to the audience for this letter. Is this how we are perceived? When someone thinks of, fill in your name here, do they say, well, they're a dedicated Christian. They love the Lord Jesus.

You can't talk to them for six minutes without finding out that they love the Lord. They love the word of God. They love the hope that they have.

So much so that people will be inspired to ask a reason for that hope. How visible are we as belonging to God and belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ? It's the lead off for this letter. And it's a wonderful example for us.

There shouldn't be anyone who has known us for any significant length of time that doesn't find out we're a believer. Many times this happens in subtle ways in the course of departing from someone that you meet in a casual way. And someone says, God bless you.

It will come up and we don't have to be overt and awkward and in someone's face. It's easy for me if I tune a piano and once I finished and I need to test it and bang on it a little bit and make sure it is stable before I leave, I play a hymn. I'll play the old rugged cross or there's a fountain filled with blood.

Anyone who knows anything will recognize these very common popular hymns. Unbelievers don't sit down and play church songs, so they will know without me saying anything that there is a background of faith. Many times when I walk into their homes, there are verses of scripture on the wall.

There are Bibles laying out. Some cases there's a bookshelf that's almost as extensive a library of books about faith as my own. And it is a wonderful thing to immediately feel connected and immediately feel related to people that you may be meeting for the first time or have just a very glancing acquaintance with, knowing that we are family.

We have a shared identity. We have a shared future. People can understand it in different ways.

You can get into the fine points of the gifts of the spirit or how do you worship and so on. That's details. People in the same family can have wildly different opinions about issues and politics

especially.

We're family. We are related, not only by blood in some cases, but more importantly in Christ. We are one in Christ.

There is the unity of faith that should also have the bond of peace. We should endeavor, and this is a point of application. If we are all slaves of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, then we should look at each other first and foremost as servants of God, fellow servants.

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. It is not my place to correct, to rebuke, or to instruct a fellow slave unless I have been placed in a position of authority. I'm a parent to a child.

I'm an elder to a younger. I'm in some biblical position where it is my responsibility to train someone up or to share and speak the truth in love, but we have to be really careful about trying to do the Holy Spirit's work. What is the Holy Spirit's voice? How does He communicate? It is the Word of God.

What is the role of the Word of God? Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. The Word of God can do that. I can work in references to scripture in my conversation, but to decide that I am right, you are mistaken, and I need to correct you, I need to elevate you to my level is dangerous.

We can speak the truth. We can share what we believe for the purpose of illumination, to shine a light, to speak the truth in love, not in harshness, not in animosity. We are fellow servants and to view ourselves constantly as here to do the will of the Master.

Jesus said, the man who goes into a far country and leaves his servant in charge, when he comes back, blessed is that servant that his master finds doing the master's business, being a good steward of the master's resources and assets, not beating his fellow servants, not eating himself silly out of the pantry, being diligent and being faithful, always thinking about the master's plans and purposes, his will, his expressed wishes. That is the driving force, James, of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave. My fellow believers, all of us should be looking at our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, as the ones who finalize and dictate the priorities, the plans, the purposes, what I am doing while I am here.

We are not our own. We are bought with a price. We have been purchased.

There is an important principle in Scripture that identifies us in two ways. This is the way James leads off of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave. There is a balancing principle and identity that we have as children of God.

What does it say in the first chapter of John? As many as received Him, to them gave He the right, the power, to be called sons of God. This is such an important thing to remember. You find it solidified in Romans 8. Romans 8, beginning in the vicinity of verse 14.

All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God, sons of God. Some of your newer translations put in italics, sons and daughters, to catch the meaning of sons. We didn't used to have to have that explained to us.

But how does this connect? How does it compare to the idea that we are slaves? You see this as Paul writes in Romans, beginning in verse 9 of chapter 8, you are not controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit. We have been delivered from slavery to our lusts, our passions, our emotions. We have been freed from that.

Those who are not in the faith, of the faith, even those who may have accepted Christ as their Savior but are not walking by faith, are not living by means of the power of the Spirit and the Word, are slaves, controlled, impelled, compelled by emotions, by the winds of doctrine, by opinions, by what other people think, subjectivity, eyes on self, eyes on people, eyes on circumstances, and there is no human power to escape that. It is God's power, His Spirit and His Word that frees us. We have been declared free, but do we walk out of that slavery so that we are no longer controlled by the flesh? The flesh will try to retake the castle.

The flesh will try to organize us, direct us, control us, lead us and guide us instead of God's Spirit and God's Word. That is what Paul talks about here in Romans 8 and 9. You, however, are not controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit, if so many conditions in Scripture get overlooked. You are free from the flesh, free from the law of sin and death, if the Spirit of God dwells in you, is an effective living presence in you.

We have the sealing of the Spirit, but we do not always have that filling of the Spirit, the active living presence that makes a difference in how we think and how we act. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. What does James say? Of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, belonging to, I belong to them as a slave.

I am as much a possession as a person can be. I am a bond slave to them. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

You have bigger problems than circumstances. You have bigger problems than challenges. We belong to Christ and we need to act accordingly.

If we recognize that we are a possession of Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit can live and dwell and bring to our minds the power of the Word. If Christ is in you, your body is dead with the sinfulness. The sinfulness death in your body is no longer a factor.

Your spirit is alive because of righteousness. The wages of sin is death. Continuing in sin, walking in sin, tolerating sin is death.

Spiritual death, productivity death, relationship death, usefulness and redeeming the time death. To be enmeshed, to be mired, to be deflected and distracted by sin, and this can be mental attitude sins of worry, of frustration, of maligning and judging and backbiting, of resentment, of bitterness, backbiting, gossiping, judging. This kills us.

It kills our spiritual life. Romans 8.10. Your body, if Christ is in you, is dead because of sin. Its sinfulness is taken out of the picture.

Your spirit is alive because of righteousness. You are not trying to escape sin any longer. You are now trying to accomplish righteousness.

Righteousness by faith. Verse 11. If the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, this is an active meaningful presence.

There is such a thing as being dead while you are alive. Leprosy was a great picture of that in the ancient world. If the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, who has power over death, who can negate death, if that spirit lives in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit who lives in you.

This is a life and death issue. To whom are we enslaved? It's one or the other. Jesus said you cannot serve, you cannot serve as a slave, both God and materialism, mammon.

Desire to be gratified in this world. Desire to be promoted, to be esteemed, to be well thought of, controlled by the opinions of others. You can't serve.

No man can serve two masters. He will love one and hate the other. You can't be both.

So whose slave are we? James makes it clear. God first, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the Father and the Son in the household.

And slaves in the ancient world understood that when there were fathers and sons, the father takes precedence, the son is right below. If you have seen the depiction of 1 Samuel recently called House of David, they I think do a good job of portraying conditions when David was a shepherd, Saul was king in Israel, Jonathan the prince, and the dynamics of authority in the quote-unquote palace, in the ruling household. And the princes and even the princesses, the daughters like Michael, are receiving deference and obedience, but not beyond what belongs to the king.

There is the father and there are the sons. This is what James recognizes before any other earthly authority, any other worldly relationship. I have a heavenly father and his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is my identity.

That is to whom I belong, whom I serve. If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin. You do not serve that master any longer.

You've been purchased with the precious blood of Christ out of that, and there is no authority unless you voluntarily go back and grant it. The spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead, if he is living in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead, I want you to notice the references to resurrection here. Three times in one verse, Romans 8 11, the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.

If he's living in you, this spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal body. Three references to resurrection. How important is new life in Christ, not just in the ages to come, but right now.

Dead to the old life, dead to the old ways, dead to the old master, dead to the old slavery, and a new kind of bond slave, a new kind of service that is positive and joyful and productive. It is life and not death. It is productive and beneficial, not destructive, harmful, and leading to death.

Therefore, verse 12, Romans 8, brothers, we have an obligation not to the flesh to live according to it. If you live according to the flesh, you will die. We say, doesn't everyone die? You know the kind of death we're talking about here.

Your time, your breath, your efforts are fruitless, unproductive, wasted day after day in the dustbin. No value, no inheritance, no treasure in heaven, no training and experience useful to the master in the ages to come. Wasted days and wasted nights.

Freddie Fender, I think, used to sing that song. Wasted time. Don Henley sang that song.

Waste, what a waste when we have the opportunity to redeem the time and convert it into eternal capital, eternal value, a reflection of the eternal glory of God. We have an obligation. We have a responsibility.

We have a requirement. We have a calling to not live according to the flesh. What does that mean in practical terms? We'll fold up our Bibles and close down our computers and go do things here shortly.

What is our motivation? When I say this is how much of the day I have left. This is how much daylight. Going to freeze tonight, got to bring in the plants.

I've got to see people, got to prepare this, get ready for the work week and so on. Does God enter into any of our calculations? We're going to see later in James, you shouldn't just say tomorrow I'm going to do this and do that, but if the Lord wills. Factor what God would have me do so that I can observe good biblical priorities, reflect solid biblical values, and have worthy spiritual goals for every effort, every task, every undertaking, every interaction, every conversation.

It makes a difference. We do this. There is a big conditional.

If is the Holy Spirit active and a living presence in us, then we are going to be bearing fruit to righteousness as we accomplish these daily, seemingly mundane, repetitive tasks and chores. They are converted into eternal capital because the Holy Spirit is infusing us with fruit, attitude, fruit, love, joy, peace, patience, with blessing to others, conscious and unconscious. Just by being the person we are supposed to be in unspoken and often unseen ways, we will be a blessing to others.

Sometimes it's simply blessing by association. Someone in our periphery is going to be blessed because we are a faithful believer and God says, I'm not going to bless you. I'm going to bless everybody around you so that you are surrounded in a pool of light that is beneficial to others and contributes to your joy and your peace and your happiness.

If you live according to the flesh, verse 13, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, self-gratification, self-interest, you will live. You will produce.

You're not a dead tree or a dead branch that's broken off for lack of faith. You're a fruitful branch. God will prune it and you'll bear more fruit.

And that fruit is useful for the master. It is beneficial to others. Verse 14, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

What's going on here? I thought we were slaves. I thought we were identified and completely possessed and under the authority and in the service of the master. How does that reconcile with being a child or a son? Paul goes on to say, verse 15, Romans 8, you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And if we are children, then we are heirs. We are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

James just said, I'm a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, if the Spirit is living within you, you're not saying master to God, you're saying father. Children are heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ, if, if.

Anytime you find an if in scripture, it's a good idea to circle it and underline what follows. That's a condition. If indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Here is the reconciliation between servanthood, bond-slave identity, and sonship, inheritance. They are sequential. See the sequence? We will be heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

If indeed now we endure, we suffer, we push through hardship, we serve now. Think about Philippians chapter two. I've quoted it many times.

You can remember the content. The Lord Jesus did not think His equality with God was a thing to be held onto, to be grasped. He emptied Himself and what did He do? He took on the form of a servant, bond-slave, same word James uses, and came in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient.

That's what a slave is. Doesn't depend on status of his own. What was the status of a slave? The status of a slave depended entirely on to whom he belonged.

If you're a slave of the king, if you're a slave of the mayor of the city, if you're the slave of someone important, people pay attention when you show up because you are a representative.

This is similar to being the ambassador of the United States to a country. The ambassador may not be that impressive as an individual, but the country he represents, the government and the administration for whom he speaks causes respect and consideration.

It isn't intrinsic worth, it is representational worth. This is who I represent. Being a slave of God and the Lord Jesus, we represent the highest of all authorities, the highest of all values, the highest of all lords and kings and masters, God Himself.

As such, we don't have to worry about what do people think of me. Their estimation, if I am a faithful servant, is going to be based on what they think of God and what they think of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if they have a low or no opinion, unbelief in God and the Lord Jesus, then I should be equally despised by them.

And if I'm not, there's a great inconsistency that needs explanation. If I am a fit representative of God and the Lord Jesus, then people's attitude toward them should be their attitude toward me, because I'm a slave. I have no worth or value of my own.

My value is representative of them, and people who don't like them shouldn't like me. There's something wrong somewhere if people like me and hate God. We should be identified with to such an extent that we are inseparable, like the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament.

So representative, so close, speaking for God in the first person, that people think the angel was God. And he wasn't. He's an angel.

But his presence is so representative of God that there's no distance between the two. That should be us. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see what the scriptures have to say about being a slave and being a child of God. How does that fit together? We'll see it when we come back.