

Out of Control

Walk the Walk: James Pt. 7

So we're looking at the book of James, which is a book that asks and answers this question: If you *really* believed the gospel of Jesus, if you *really* believed what Jesus said he came to do, what would that mean for the way in which you live your life every day? What does that look like on the ground? What *practically* does that look like?

And every single week, we're looking at another part of the text – in fact, we're almost done, today we move into the last chapter. It's not a long book. So let's get started by reading the end of chapter four and the first few verses of chapter five. It has some intense moments!

James 4:13–5:6: *“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”*

Continuing on in chapter 5:

“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.”

4 “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.”

Now, I want to draw your attention to two places: At the beginning of 4:13 and at the beginning of 5:1 where he says, “*Now listen...*” this is an ancient Semitic way of giving a serious rebuke. This is akin to saying, “Woe unto you!” I don't know what we do. If you heard somebody begin a statement saying, “Look here, you!” you figure whatever comes after that is not going to be pleasant. It's the beginning of a challenge.

That's what this is. This is *very* strong language. James is rebuking a *particular* thing that these folks are doing. What is that? This is a continuation of a theme that was begun in chapter 3, which is a theme of wisdom. And James is contrasting God's wisdom with the world's wisdom, or with what the Bible calls "foolishness".

Now, when you and I use the words "fool" or "foolishness", it's just a pejorative term. It's an insult. It just means, "I don't like you," but in the Bible the words "fool" or "foolishness" has a very specific connotation. Foolishness in the Bible is blindness to reality that leads to destructive choices. Foolishness is blindness - being so out of touch with the way things really are that it leads to destructive choices.

And there's a particular kind of foolishness James is condemning here and warning us against. And let's look at it under four headings. What he's telling us here is about a *problem* we have, and the *reasons* it is a problem, the thing that can make the problem *worse*, and the thing that can make the problem *better* or solve it. The problem, the reasons it's a problem, what can make it worse, and what can make it better.

First, The problem. Now, what is the problem? What is he condemning? And actually, it's right there in the beginning. Look at **v. 13**. "***Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.'***" That's what he's condemning.

Now, on the surface of it, it looks like he's condemning what we could call today strategic planning, because this is a business plan. There's a time frame - a year. There is a revenue target, which is to become profitable in a year, which is pretty ambitious. And that's what he seems to be condemning.

Now the problem is he can't just be condemning planning, because as we've mentioned before, James draws on the Old Testament Wisdom Literature a lot, and in the book of Proverbs, to *not* plan is foolishness, a *lack* of planning is foolishness. And also, there's that famous place in Luke 14 where Jesus talks about a man who is building a tower but he doesn't actually do a budget before he starts the tower. He doesn't realize he doesn't have enough money or doesn't have enough materials or doesn't have the labor to build and complete the tower.

Then he talks about a general who goes out to war without counting up the assets, so Jesus in Luke 14 calls a lack of planning foolishness. So James can't be saying what is foolishness is simply the planning. It's an attitude of heart *around* the planning he's condemning. In particular, the key is v. 16, where he says, "As it is, you **boast** in your arrogant schemes." In other words, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit..." That plan is a *boast*. It's not just a plan, it's a boast. And in the Bible boasting is a very important theological theme.

See, in ancient times, a boast was a ritual of warfare. Have you ever seen any kind of depiction, a play or a movie, of some ancient battle? Always before they charge, the king or the captain or the leader – good odds it's Mel Gibson – get up and makes a boast. They get up there and they say, "Tonight we will feast inside walls of our enemy! *Charge!*" And everybody goes out. Or, "Our cavalry will cut through them like the dogs of hell! *Charge!*" Then they all run.

Now the reality is, virtually none of us have ever actually been in a battle. So here's a question. How do you get a bunch of men to charge into certain death knowing a third of them or a quarter of them or half of them are going to die? How do you get them excited about that? How do you get people to have the *confidence* to face the foe? And the answer is a boast. In ancient times, you made a boast, and that got people riled up, and they went out.

Now the Bible understands that is actually a spiritual category, because **Jeremiah 9:23-24** - this very famous passage – reads, "*This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but **let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,**" declares the Lord.*"

God forbids people to *boast* in riches or might or intelligence. Why? See your boast is what *gives* you the confidence to face life. What is the deepest source of your confidence that enables you to get up in the morning and face life and face difficulties and *charge*? What do you tell yourself? What is your boast?

And of course, Jeremiah - not just Jeremiah but the whole Bible - says all of us tend to boast in something *besides* the Lord. We find something that says, "If I have that or if I do that, then I can face it," and we find our deepest source of personal confidence in something besides the Lord. Now what James is talking about is a particular form of this, and what he is saying is there is - I'll give it a name in a minute - a particular shade of heart that looks to your *planning*, looks to your *due diligence*, looks to your *research*, looks to your *strategizing*, and looks to your *management*.

There's a shade of heart that says, "I've *done* my research, and I've *done* all my work, and I've *made* my plans, and I've *thought* it all out, and now I'm in control of my future." This is what we're going to call, for lack of a better term, "the life-control illusion", the illusion that if you do your due diligence and if you do your planning and if you do your strategizing, *you* can control your own destiny and you can control your future.

And it's the *opposite* of a heart that says, "What happens to me is basically dependent on forces beyond my control, and if there are *any* accomplishments and if there are *any* comforts and if there are *any* good things in my life, it's because of divine help." So this is what we're going to call the life-control illusion.

Namely, that with your planning, and your really, really hard work, and your thinking about *every* contingency, and *all* of your strategizing, and *all* of your due diligence, and *all* of your homework...*you* can control your own future. Now what's amazing to me is James had enough people who had this problem in his day and time that he wrote a passage on it, but it's a good thing for us.

And of course, God put the Bible together. He knew what people needed, but it's a good thing for us, because, relatively speaking, there has *never* been a culture in which this particular form of foolishness was more prevalent. Do you know what we *are* here in modern North American culture? What are you told in every popular movie? What are you told in practically every elementary school class?

You're told, "You can be whatever you choose to be. Whatever you want to do, you set your heart to it. You set your mind to it. You can be whatever you choose to be." That's the American way. That's exactly what James says here is out of touch with reality. I'm going to see where my fellows Gen X'rs are at. How many of you remember the *Back to the Future* trilogy? Do you remember how it ended in the third film – the western one? Do you remember what Professor Brown says at the end? Let me show you... **[BTF :26]**

And we all cheered...because it's inspiring...because we're Americans. That's why that movie was a blockbuster, because at the very end, what is the message? *The* message is the future is whatever you make it, so make it a good one.

Malcolm Gladwell is a secular intellectual, and he wrote a book a few years back called *Outliers*. His main thesis is, “The biggest misconception about success is that we do it solely on our smarts, ambition, hustle and hard work.” And the book basically assembles all kinds of arguments to show what most cultures and what most social scientists and what most people in most places in the world have always known, and that is your success is actually *not* under your control.

I mean the whole point of the book is to say, yes, hard work and aptitude are very important if you’re going to be a success, *but* he says those are actually a small part of the whole, because *along* with your hard work and success, there have to be circumstances, timing, your upbringing, your culture, and opportunities. *All* these things have to line up or you’re not a success.

Yes, hard work and aptitude are crucial, but only if *all* these other things line up are you a success, because it takes *all kinds* of things to happen to make you a success, and you’re *not* in control of those things. *No* human being is in control of those things at all! You read the book, and it’s not rocket science. And that’s not even the Bible.

What the Bible says goes even further. What James says is, if you believe - and we do as Americans, it’s deep in our hearts - that the future is *whatever you make of it*...you’re a fool. That’s not an insult. It’s a fact. The biblical fact is you are out of touch with reality. You’re out of touch with how things really work, so much so that you’re going to make all kinds of destructively wrong choices in your life.

So that’s our problem: the life-control illusion. Secondly, **The reason for the problem.** Why is it such a problem? Why *is* it so out of touch with reality? James gives us two reasons why this is such a huge problem and why it’s so dangerous. And those two things are here in verses 14 and 15. In **v. 14**, after he says you boastfully say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there ...” he says, “*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.*” You do not know.

Ok, the first reason the life-control illusion is an illusion - it’s foolishness and out of touch with reality - is because it’s based on the assumption it is possible for you to know enough about the future to really **manage risk**, to really manage everything so you can control your future, so you can determine your future is a good one.

It assumes you know enough about the future to do the planning, and that's just not true. And the reason why this assumption is so destructive is if you *do* think you can know the future well enough to control through planning your future, it leads to – paradoxically - both arrogance and over-confidence *and* anxiety and under-confidence at the same time. Let me show you what I mean.

First of all, it leads to over-confidence. Back in the 2008 recession when all of those business models lost investors *trillions* of dollars in real estate *because* they claimed they could predict risk and they couldn't, when all of that collapsed and when the whole economy practically collapsed, what did the designers of the models say?

I'll tell you what they said. They said, "Well, you know, we had these great models, but *this* and *that* happened. Now, this and that has never happened before. This and that has never happened since we were keeping records. And because this and that has never happened before, how could we have known? And therefore, we couldn't have known. And therefore our models didn't take this and that into consideration because we didn't think this and that could happen. So it's not the models fault. We didn't know!"

That's what James is saying. You don't know, and therefore, they were over-confident. He says you *can't* know the future, and if you think you *can* know the future enough to really control things and to manage risk, you're going to make really, really bad mistakes, destructively bad choices, because of over-confidence. There's exhibit A.

But ironically, this idea that you know or you think you can know enough about the future to make wise choices and all of that actually creates anxiety as well. It not only creates over-confidence; it creates under-confidence, because think about what worry is for a minute. What is worry? Worry is saying, "I *know* how my life ought to go. I know *exactly* how it has to go...and I'm afraid it's not going there. I know exactly what has to happen if I'm going to have the life I should have, and I'm afraid it's not going there." That's what worry is. Worry assumes you know.

Your worry is based on your assurance that you know the future, that you know what should happen, that you know what tomorrow *ought* to bring...and you don't. So both anxiety and overconfidence come from this out-of-touch-with-reality assumption that you know enough to be able to control your future through planning and hard work, but you *don't!* You *can't* control the future!

And that brings us to the second reason. The first reason why this is so wrong is because (verse 14) you don't know, but the second reason why this is so bad is because of v. **15**, where it says you don't control things. Look carefully! It's a simple statement, but the ramifications are great. *Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* Do you see what it is saying?

Every *this* and every *that* that happens, only happens if the Lord wills it. Now we're getting to a place here where he's tapping into a major theme in the Bible. Let me just warn you by saying the Bible's balance and nuance when it comes to this subject - Are we free creatures *or* is everything fixed and determined in life? - The Bible has a balance and a nuance about this subject beyond anything you're going to find anywhere else. And therefore, all of us are going to have to stretch to catch up, but it's crucial.

Do you know what he's saying here? Do you know what the Bible says about this? Most of us make an assumption - well almost all of us deep in our heart - in fact, it's so deep it's unconscious, so I'm trying to make it conscious so you see it. All of us assume that *either* God is in control of everything and everything that happens is part of a plan...*or* our choices matter. It's either/or.

Most of us think, "Well, if everything that's going to happen will happen no matter what - if it's fixed, if it's determined, if it's going to happen no matter what - then what I do doesn't matter. Whether I'm this or that or this or that, it doesn't matter. Fate will have the final word." So either it's fixed and what I do does not matter, or what I do matters, and then the future is whatever I make it.

We think it's either/or, but the Bible says it's both/and, and that is absolutely crucial for you to live a wise life. If you don't understand this, you're going to be foolish in some way. How is it both/and? Well, it's all through the Bible, but I'll just give you one example. On the Day of Pentecost - which we talked about a couple of weeks ago - Peter is preaching.

He preaches his first sermon, and he says, **Acts 2:23**, "*This man [Jesus] was handed over to you by **God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge**; and you, with the help of wicked men, **put him to death** by nailing him to the cross.*" And it says at the end of this speech, all the people were greatly convicted and they repented and about 3,000 became Christians that day.

But I want you to notice, Peter didn't say, "Well you know, because it was foreordained, those of you who helped kill Jesus, you couldn't help it. Besides that, it doesn't matter. It was going to happen anyway. If you didn't kill him, *somebody else* would have killed him. It really didn't matter. It was going to happen. It might as well be you."

No. Look at this. Nor does he say, “Oh, yes. What you did mattered, and therefore, all the hosts of heaven were up there biting their nails as to whether Jesus would actually die on the cross and save the world or not. It was a really good thing you killed him!” No! No! Think! What Peter is saying and what the Bible says is God absolutely and infallibly works out His sovereign will.

He’s wise and He’s good - though often mysterious - and everything that happens happens according to His will. But **You are responsible** for all of your choices. No one is forcing you to make the choices you make, and you *are* responsible for them, and they matter, and you will be held accountable for them. It’s both/and.

Now unless you have these together, you don’t live life wisely. You either have a tendency to say, “Everything is fixed. Who knows? Nothing I do matters. I just can’t seem to make any difference.” You become passive and indifferent. You don’t care. *Or* you say, “Life-control illusion. I can do it. I can make the future what I want to make it. I can be anything I want to be.”

And then you melt down. You freak out. You’re filled with anxiety. It’s up to you. It’s up to you. It’s up to you, and you know you can’t bear the pressure. Why? Because you’re taking the place of God, and you’re unqualified for the job. Anybody in a job they’re not qualified for feels internally anxious.

If you’re going to live wisely, you need to know what the Bible says, and that is that your choices absolutely matter. Absolutely matter. There are consequences to them. You’re responsible for them. And yet, *ultimately*, you are not in control of what happens; God is. I read an article by an American psychologist the other day about how that profession can best help the victims of the recent earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. After the physical needs, there will be mental health challenges.

And he had a warning. Because he was talking about how unwise Americans often are about how they understand mental health problems in other cultures. He says we have a tendency to think everybody is like us. And he used as an example the Indian Ocean tsunami from 20 years ago when hundreds of thousands of people were killed and people’s lives were ruined?

Many people from America and the West poured in to that area to try to help people, and many of them came as mental health experts saying, “We’re going to help you with your trauma. We know you’re traumatized and upset, and we’re going to help you.” He says, now listen, people needed sympathy. They were in grief. They needed people to weep with them. You need to weep with those who weep.

But he said that what Americans don’t realize is almost everybody in the world is better at dealing with suffering than we are. Do you know why? Almost everybody else in the world believes our lives are *basically* dependent on forces beyond us, that life is *not* controllable, that things like this *happen*.

They are reconciled to it, but Americans feel like life should go right, and if it’s not right, somebody is screwing up. Maybe you screwed up. Maybe we need to throw the bums out of office. Maybe we need to sue somebody who is not doing their job. But life should always be okay, because of the life-control illusion.

And he says as a result Americans are the people in the world who are the most traumatized by suffering. Because of this illusion, they do not know how to handle it. They can’t take *bad* things in stride. Do you know why? Because James says you don’t know how to live wisely. Why? Because of blindness to reality that leads to destructive choices. So what are we going to do about it?

Well let’s move to the third point, What makes the problem worse? Because what’s intriguing about this passage is James does not immediately say what will make it *better*, but instead shows what makes it worse. What is the relationship between verses 4:13–17 and 5:1–6? It looks like they’re two different subjects, but they’re not.

The attitude of verses 13–17 - the illusion you can control your life through lots of planning and strategizing and managing and hard work - *leads* to the kind of people you see depicted in 5:1–6. Or put it another way. How do we know whether you have the life-control illusion *or* whether you believe everything good in your life is a gift of God? Do you know how we can tell? How you spend and use your money. *That’s* the acid test. Why?

If you really believe that your success, relatively speaking – and everybody has a little bit of it - if you believe where you are today is mainly because of forces beyond your control - divine help, the gift of God - then what assets you have you will not treat as fully yours. You won’t *see* them as fully yours because you know to a great degree they’re there because of a gift. It’s a gift.

And what that does is it makes you radically generous with your assets. People who really understand that their lives are not the result of their hard work but the result of the grace of God are radically generous. They always live at a lifestyle level lower than what they could afford, because they're giving so much of their money away. They're always pushing to give greater and greater percentages of their money away.

But what if you have the life-control illusion which, basically, Americans have drilled into them by popular culture and their educational system? What happens if you have the life-control illusion and you have success? It's the worst thing for you, because you treat everything that comes to you as absolutely yours, and the result is what you have in 5:1–6.

I can't go into it, and I'd like to come back later in the year to some of these passages on money, but here's what you see. Two things. The first is ruthless business practices. These are business owners who are underpaying their workers. They're not sharing their profits with them. They don't see the profit from their company as really belonging to the community or to the workers. They see it as belonging to them.

Secondly, there is self-indulgence. And that word means to spend more of your money on yourself than is right. Spending it on your home. Spending it on your vacations. Spending it on your clothes. Spending it on yourself, because you see it as *yours*. And perhaps the most frightening part of this passage of what can happen to you if you have the life-control illusion and it meets with some success in your life is **v. 3** when it says, "*Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire.*"

Now obviously, that's metaphorical, but a metaphor for what? It's talking about the fact that there's nothing wrong with being rich if you don't have the life-control illusion, because then that makes you a force for good in the world, but if you have the life-control illusion that really says, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul," then when the success comes, it eats out your insides spiritually. It makes you a fool.

The book of Proverbs says the essence of foolishness is to be wise in your own eyes. And what happens to people with the life-control illusion who get some success is they begin to say, "*I did this! I mastered this, my life. I'm smarter than other people. That's why I'm more successful than other people.*"

Therefore, they begin to apply that to *every part* of their life. They assume they are smarter than people in *every* area of life. They assume that if they have their way and if they get control, they can make a success out of everything, and that's just not true. Some years ago, I knew a man who had become very successful in his field and later in life started to explore Christianity. See, for most of his life he didn't feel much need for God. He felt in charge and in control of his life. He was successful at his work.

And he thought it would be the same with his family. And yet, as his children grew up, they accused him of trying to control their lives like he controlled every other aspect of his business. And he came to realize that they were right. He was humbled to realize that what worked on his business, backfired miserably in his family. And as a result he'd lost relationship with his kids. And so he realized that when it came to the things that mattered most, he really had *no* control over his life. And that's ultimately what brought him to God.

Do you see what happened? The success tied to that life-control illusion *ate* away at his wisdom like fire on the inside, and he started to act with a certain swagger and arrogance in every area of life, not realizing the success he had was a gift. So what makes it worse is success.

Well, finally, What makes the problem better?

What is the solution? Now honestly, James only hints at it, but if you read chapter 4 in reverse you get it. The solution is *the life of breath* and *the breath of life*. Now what James talks about in chapter 4 is the life of breath. It's pretty brutal. As a matter of fact, this whole sermon is pretty brutal, and I'm sorry. Tuesday night in Connect Group, somebody referred to the woman on the curriculum as a motivational speaker. I said I think I may be a "de-motivational speaker"!

But I believe that in the end truth is better than hype – even a hard truth. And this is one of the most hard-hitting parts of the passage when he says in **v. 14**, “*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.*” - then he says – “*What is your life? **You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.***”

Well gee! He says, “You think you're such hot stuff! You think you're in control of your future? What is your life? You are just a *mist* that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” And the image, I think, is when you go outside in the morning and it's really cold and you speak to somebody, you can see your breath, a little puff of mist right on your breath for a second, and then it's gone. We don't experience this much in Texas, but you know what I'm talking about.

There is nothing more fleeting than that and nothing more brief than that. There's nothing harder to hold onto than that, and yet James says you're out of touch with reality unless you realize your *life* is like that, and everything *in* your life is like that, and the life of *this world* is like that. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 7:30-31**, a very famous passage, "*Those who mourn, [should live] as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.*"

Meditate with me for a second. This world is passing away. It's vanishing. That's what James says. You know every scientist will tell you there is no doubt about the fact that someday the sun will die, and everything here will be cold, and that means there will be no life here at all. Do you know what that means?

Absolutely everything you do will be utterly forgotten, and nothing you do - *nothing* - will make any lasting difference. You might be a genocidal maniac, you might be the greatest humanitarian of your generation, but in the end nothing you do will make any lasting difference and nobody will even be around to remember anything you do, which means that unless there's a God in eternity, nothing you do has any lasting meaning at all. I told you I was a "de-motivational speaker"!

Do you know why it has no lasting meaning at all? Because this world is passing away. It's *vanishing* like a mist on your breath on a cold morning. By the way, it's not just that the world is passing away, but you *personally* are passing away. Everything. If you take a chicken you're cooking out of the oven and put it on the table, it's too hot to eat so you give it a few minutes. Why does it cool off, class?

Because it's losing energy. Why does it lose energy, class? The second law of thermodynamics, which is, everything is running down. Everything is losing energy. Everything is going to more and more disorder. Ok, but don't leave the chicken on the table too long, *because* of the second law of thermodynamics. You'd better eat it, because if you wait two days, it won't be good to eat, and if you wait two months, it will be stinking and filled with maggots, because everything is running down, and everything is losing energy.

And do you know that that's what's happening to you and me? Now it goes a little slower, and we have these things called fitness centers, nutrition and diet, and then there's makeup...but in the end that's where we're going. We're *vanishing*. What is your life? And it's not just that you're personally and individually vanishing; our families are vanishing.

You know right now, if you are young parents and you have a bunch of little ones around the table, you just feel so rich. Do you not? And yet, that family is vanishing. Oh, it's slow, but someday one of the people around that table will see every other person in the grave, because this world is passing away.

And guess what. No amount of strategic planning, no amount of due diligence, no amount of risk management, no amount of planning, and no amount of hard work will *stop* it. So what are you supposed to be thinking about? What is James saying? What are you supposed to be thinking about?

Instead of saying, "Oh, if only I could get down to a size 8," or "Oh, if only I could make that much money and then buy this and then buy that," he's saying why don't you say, "What can I do that will be around 5 billion years from now? What can I do in *my soul* that will be around 5 billion years from now? What can I do in *other people's lives* that will be around 5 billion years from now that will last?"

And you say, "How could that be? How could you do *anything* that really lasts? I thought James says, 'What is your life?'" Well, yes, but the answer to the life of breath, which is all we have, is the breath of life. When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection in the upper room, do you remember what he did? **John 20:22** says, "And with that he *breathed on them* and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Do you know what the word "spirit" means? In Hebrew *ruach* and in Greek *pnuema* - but they both mean "breath". What is the Holy Spirit? God's breath. Well didn't they already have the breath of life? Didn't God breathe the breath of life into Adam and Eve? Yeah, they had the *physical* breath of life. We have the physical breath of life, but it's running down. It's temporary. But when Jesus Christ, to his disciples, to the people who believed in him, *breathed* on them and put *God's* breath into them, he gave them an inner nature that lasts forever. This is the moment the disciples were "born again".

So that's the reason why Paul is able to say in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, "*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us **an eternal glory** that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is **temporary**, but what is unseen is **eternal**.*"

How is this possible? How is it possible that our life of breath can be turned into permanence through the breath of life? You read James 4 backwards. All the things James 4 is saying we shouldn't do implies things we *should* do, and the person who preeminently has done the things we should do is Jesus.

Who is it who lived a life without any boasting or arrogance? Who is the One who made himself of no reputation? Who is the One who said, “Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, for I am lowly and gentle in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”? But most of all, *who* preeminently said, “If the Lord wills...”? Who is the supreme example of someone who lost control, who was like a lamb, silent before her shearers?

I mean here’s the Lord of the universe...Here’s Jesus Christ who was in absolute control, and he comes to earth and he doesn’t *say* anything when they charge him. He doesn’t *do* anything when they beat him. And they *nail* him to a cross and they say, “If you are the Son of God, come down. Take control of your life!” And he doesn’t do it. Why? He was in our place. He was dying for our sins, and here’s the gospel.

The gospel is Jesus Christ came and lost control of his life so that you could know everything is under control. **Romans 8:28**, “... *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” The One who lost control of his life did so, so you could now know, if you believe in him, everything is under the control of the One who lost control for you.

Yes, I don’t know why God is doing many of the things He’s doing, but I do know He loves you because he became human, he came to earth, he lost control, and he was destroyed. And you are never going to be able to take your mitts off of your life and admit you don’t have control until you see Jesus losing all control to save you.

Why did the Eternal become mortal like a puff of air that could be snuffed out? The Eternal became mortal so we mortals could become eternal, so we could *last*. Sin was eating our insides like a fire, but Jesus put the fire out. That’s the reason why the psalmist says in **Psalm 103:15-17**, “*The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. **But** from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him...*”

Don’t you want a boast that will enable you to face anything in spite of the fleetingness of your life? Boast in nothing but the cross of Christ. Boast in nothing but the love of Christ. Then you’ll be able to *face* anything, and then you’ll be able to *handle* suffering, because you’ll know that you don’t know.

And because you know that yeah, you're not in control but *he's* in control and he lost control for me. And you'll take your money and you'll spend it on other people. You'll take your time and you'll spend it on other people. Don't we want to be a community of people like that? People of that kind of peace in our souls, with that kind of pride in what Jesus has done for us?

Let's pray...