

**Excerpts from Life-study of James, Message
10 & 12**

**PRACTICAL VIRTUES OF CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION (10/12)**

Bible Verses:

James 4:6 But He gives greater grace; therefore it says, “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

James 4:15 Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will both live and do this or that.

James 5:17 Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and he earnestly prayed that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

We need to learn to draw near to God (v. 8) to receive greater grace. Instead of being proud and resisting God, we should receive in meekness the implanted word. Someone who is proud cannot receive God's implanted word. If we are humble, we shall receive the implanted word, and we shall also receive greater grace.

Then in verse 15 James encourages us to say, “If the Lord wills, we will both live and do this or that.” Here James is saying that instead of declaring that today or tomorrow we will go to a certain place, spend time there, do business, and make a profit, we should simply say, “If the Lord wills....”

The word of James in verse 15 sounds very much like a maxim. When I was young, I had the thought of making a sign with this maxim on it to remind me always to say, “If the Lord wills.” Although I still appreciate this saying, I can recognize that it has an Old Testament tone.

What James says in these verses is different in tone from what is found elsewhere in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. Perhaps you can think of certain verses written by Paul that are similar to James’ word in 4:15. Nevertheless, the basic tone of Paul’s writing is different, for he charges us to walk according to the Spirit.

In the book of Acts we see that Paul was led by the Spirit and walked in spirit. Acts 16:6 says that they were “forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” Then verse 7 says that the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go into Bithynia. Here we

see that when Paul was traveling for the preaching of the gospel, he was restrained and directed by the Spirit. On other occasions Paul was stirred in his spirit (Acts 17:16), was pressed in the spirit (Acts 18:5), and purposed in spirit (Acts 19:21).

To say, “If the Lord wills,” is rather objective and is quite much according to the tone of the Old Testament. But to be led of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to do what our spirit constrains us to do are subjective and are much more according to the New Testament.

I certainly have no intention of belittling James or his Epistle. However, I must truthfully point out that after many years studying this book, I have learned that this Epistle is very Jewish and has a strong color, tone, taste, and atmosphere of the Old Testament. If we did not have the fourteen Epistles of Paul, we might be influenced by the book of James to go back to Judaism. Although we appreciate and need James’ emphasis on practical Christian perfection, we still need to be very clear that much of his Epistle has the tone, color, and atmosphere of the Old Testament.

But according to the divine revelation in the entire New Testament, there is a definite, clear

distinction between the two. Keeping the Old Testament law merely makes us right with God and men so that we might be justified by the law. But living by the inner law of life (Heb. 8:10-11; Rom. 8:2) is to live and magnify Christ (Phil. 1:20-21) for the building up of His Body to express Him (Eph. 1:22-23) and for the building of God's house to satisfy Him (1 Tim. 3:15) This is for the accomplishment of God's eternal goal according to His New Testament economy. Though we become perfect by keeping the Old Testament law, we are still void of God's eternal goal. Only living by the inner law of life avails for this. Such a living spontaneously and unconsciously fulfills more than what is required under the Old Testament law (Rom. 8:4) even to the standard of the constitution of the kingdom, as revealed in chapters five through seven of the Gospel of Matthew.

In 5:16b-18 James says, "An operating petition of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and in prayer he prayed that it should not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit." The words "in prayer he prayed" indicate that a

prayer from the Lord was given to Elijah, in which he prayed. He did not pray in his feeling, thought, intention, mood, or in any kind of motivation from circumstances or situations for the fulfilling of his own purpose. He prayed in the prayer given him by the Lord for the accomplishing of His will.

What is the meaning of this expression, to pray in a prayer? The prayer that Elijah prayed was great, for he prayed that it would not rain on earth for three years and six months. This is much greater than praying for the healing of a sick person. After three and a half years, Elijah prayed again, this time praying that heaven would give rain. Elijah could pray in this way because God gave him a prayer, because God burdened him with a prayer. In other words, Elijah had the burden to pray in a particular way, and that burden was a prayer given to him by God.

We should not pray according to our memory, observation, or our own burden. On the contrary, we must have a burden from God to pray for a certain thing, just as Elijah was burdened with the prayer given to him by God. God gave Elijah a prayer, and in that prayer Elijah prayed. This is not a matter of praying in earnest. It is a matter that God, in His

move and according to His plan, gave Elijah a prayer, and Elijah was burdened to pray the prayer that God gave him. Therefore, Elijah prayed in a prayer.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <http://online.recoveryversion.bible/>

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary:]

Introduction

[MM:] This is Matt Miller and Dick Taylor is with me again, today in the studio for another wonderful Life-Study from the Epistle of James. Dick, welcome back to the studio.

[DT:] Thank you, Matt. You said, “A wonderful Life-Study”. You are right. There are no studies in the whole Earth like the Life-Studies. May we all receive maximum life benefit from this Life-Study.

[MM:] This is actually the eighth radio program we’ve done in the Life-Study of James, and it’s covering printed message number 10. And, we’ve seen a lot so far, Dick, that the Life-Study of James is a little bit different than the other Life-Studies, because James was not fully clear about God’s New Testament economy. And Witness Lee’s really made this clear so far up to now, but we’re gonna see a little bit more of that today, aren’t we?

[DT:] We are. And it’s good that he’s brought out this contrast so that we could be helped by this, never to be deviating in the New Testament ministry.

[MM:] Well, there are some important points in James. And one of them, I wanna read first before we get further into the program today, is James chapter 4 verses 6 and 7. It says, “but He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Be subject, therefore, to God and withstand the Devil, and he will flee from you.” Here’s Witness Lee.

Part 1

[MM:] Dick, this is really short, but I think it’s really important to have this proper attitude of humility so that we could receive the “greater grace”. I really like this and I think it’s important for our spiritual experience.

[DT:] Really true, Matt. And I appreciate so much that through this ministry, through the Life-Studies, we get helped to see what grace is. Grace is just God Himself, embodied in the wonderful Christ, and realized as the life-giving Spirit to be our life, our life supply, for our enjoyment. If we really see who He is, we will not approach the Lord in a proud way. Rather, we’ll realize we are nothing and He is everything. No wonder, God resists the proud. To resist the proud means resisting those who don’t recognize that Christ is everything. In God’s economy, Christ is everything. So, day by day, even beginning in the morning, it’s so precious to just tell the Lord, “Lord, I am nothing, You are everything. I love You. I just receive You as my grace. Without You, I can do nothing in the Christian life. Thank You, today, Lord, for being my all-sufficient Grace. God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble. May we be those who receive greater grace, everyday.

[MM:] Amen, Dick. I enjoyed that short little portion and the footnote on there talks about, according to the context, this refers to our being proud toward God, which causes Him to resist us. Our being humble also is

toward God and causes Him to give us grace, which He desires us to have. Let's go back to Witness Lee, and before we do that, I wanna read the verses he's gonna cover. It's a portion in James chapter 4 verses 13 through 15. "Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow we will go into this or that city and spend a year there, and do business and make profit. Whereas, you do not know the matter of tomorrow, what your life will be, for you are a vapor which appears for a little while and then disappears. Instead you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will both live and do this or that." Let's go to Witness Lee for his comments in these verses.

Part 2

[MM:] Okay, Dick, let's stop right there and talk about this difference between the objective following the Lord as the Lord wills, and the subjective aspect of following the Spirit in our spirit.

[DT:] Yeah. I appreciate, like what Brother Lee said, Matt, that, I also used to appreciate this phrase very much, "if the Lord wills". And I do appreciate what he points out in the Life-Study, that sometimes, we can use that as a kind of *cop-out* or protection to not commit ourselves to anyone. Somebody says, will you come to some place? And we say, *Oh yeah, I'll be there...* but then we say, *if the Lord wills*. We can use it in a way that say, *well, I'm not gonna commit to anything*. And, just kind of improper spirituality. So, I understand what he was saying is, on one hand, as a young person, he really enjoyed it, and we *do* care for the Lord's will. On the other hand, the overall tone, taste, and flavor of this book is still the Old Testament flavor and taste. And so, I appreciate so much that he's bringing out the difference between the Old Testament taste and tone and the New Testament taste and tone. Which means the taste in the Old Testament is more objective, God is more outside of you, distant, far away. But, the New Testament, Christ has become a wonderful, wonderful, life-giving Spirit. The God of the universe is now in us as the life-giving Spirit. And 2 Timothy 4 says, He is *with* our spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. So this God in Christ as the Spirit according to the New Testament is very subjective. His leading is not just in a kind of "if God wills" in an outward way, depending on God's will outwardly and objectively. But rather, experiencing this One with His will by being one with Him in His spirit. And, like He said, Galatians 5 says, "Walk by the Spirit". And Romans 8:4 says, "We need to be those who walk according to the Spirit". That's not just the capital "S" Spirit, but that's the wonderful Christ, as the Spirit, mingled with us in our spirit. And you can see this really demonstrated by Paul in Acts 16, because he was forbidden by the Spirit of Jesus to go to a certain point, to a certain place. And he was also held back by the Holy Spirit. So he was experiencing that matter of the Spirit, actually leading him subjectively. And it wasn't just a kind of general, objective relationship with God, "if the Lord wills". But rather a very subjective experience with this One inside of him as the Spirit. And I was thinking, Matt, of second Corinthians 2:12, which says, he had a chance to go to a certain place, but he said, "I had no rest in my spirit.", because he couldn't find Titus, his brother. So that indicates again that he did not just merely lived by outward environment in an objective way, "if the Lord wills". But, moment by moment, he would be a person living subjectively with this wonderful Christ as the life-giving Spirit within him. Surely, this was the subjective experience of the Lord's will.

[MM:] That's very good, Dick. A couple more verses pointed out in the Life-Study are that Paul was stirred in his spirit in Acts 17:16, he was pressed in his spirit in Acts 18:5, and in 19:21, he purposed in his spirit. All indicates a subjective leading of the Spirit. Let's go back to Witness Lee.

Part 3

[MM:] Well, Dick, we've really got a good picture here of the human level versus the divine level.

[DT:] That's right. I'm glad he used this illustration, the human level, the divine level. Trying to keep the law according to the Old Testament is really on the human level. And even if you do achieve anything, guess who it's

for? Ultimately, it's for yourself - "Look how wonderful I am!" It reminds me of Acts 21, Matt. Here was James, one of the leading brothers there, bringing Paul into Jerusalem. And after Paul gave a report of all that the Lord was doing through his journeys, then James says, "Hey, Paul, look. Look at that, myriads of believers that are here. And they are all zealous for the law." No wonder, James' book still has this flavor. He didn't realize what a mixture there was with his ministry. And so, that's why it's so good for Brother Lee to point this out that there's two levels. There's the human level and the divine level. The human level is just seeing, still, the objective God, trying to take care of Him and honor Him by keeping the law outwardly, which none of us can do anyway. But Christ came as the fulfillment of the law. And today, He's the wonderful life-giving Spirit. So we're not here just keeping the outward letter of the law. But we are those living by the inner law of life. And I love what Brother Lee mentioned, that if we just try to be an outward law keeper, it is just for our notoriety, "look how wonderful we are". But if you take care of the law of life, that's Christ as the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, then we know Christ, we experience Christ, we enjoy Christ, we get saturated with Christ, and we become the enlargement of Christ, which is the Body of Christ, for His expression and for His glory. What a difference between these two levels! Let's stand on the divine level with Christ as the life-giving Spirit within our spirit for the fulfillment of God's goal. Brother Lee mentioned this several times. His goal, just to be a keeper of law, has nothing to do with God's goal. It's only on the human level. How to live on the divine level? Take care of Christ as the inner law of life so that we can build up the Body of Christ for His expression.

[MM:] What a contrast, Dick, to take care of our self without reaching God's goal versus enjoying Christ, so God can have the building up of the Body of Christ and have His eternal goal accomplished. Let's go back to Witness Lee for a conclusion. Let me read the verses that He's gonna cover here. We're gonna jump over to chapter 5 verse 16 and 17. In the Life-Study, this is actually part of Life-Study number 12. And this is the only portion we're gonna cover in Life-Study 12. It's, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The petition of a righteous man avails much in its working. Elijah was a man of like feeling with us and he earnestly prayed that it will not rain, and it did not rain on the Earth for three years and six months." Here's Witness Lee.

Part 4

[MM:] Dick, in the Recovery Version, the footnote there on "earnestly prayed", it means literally "prayed in a prayer", just to make that clear. This is enlightening to me, that it's not just a prayer. It's a prayer that comes out of a deeper burden from the Lord.

[DT:] That's right. And again this ties in with this whole program, that the Lord's desire is that we would experience Him and know Him subjectively. I was thinking, Matt, that after Christ was resurrected, He ascended, in this moment, He was in His heavenly ministry. One of the main things that He was doing was that He was praying. I tell you, that is *the* prayer. This Christ is the praying Christ in His present heavenly ministry. So, to pray in a prayer is to be one with this wonderful, praying Christ. Christ, as the living One today, is in His heavenly ministry. In this moment, He's praying. His desire is not that we just pray a lot of things. But that we be absolutely one with Him. This is very subjective. This is not on a human level. This is on the divine level. This is practicing to be one spirit with the Lord, so that we can be people who pray in a prayer. We pray in the divine prayer. Christ is praying, and may we also be those who are praying in oneness with Him. That is the real burden. That's not just a prayer for our own things, according to our own idea, or for our own profit. But rather, this is praying with Christ, as the marvelous heavenly Intercessor. And I like the incense altar in the tabernacle, and it's spoken of in the book of Hebrews a number of times, shows us that Christ has a reality, is the interceding Christ in His heavenly ministry. What He needs on Earth is the church, in union with Him, as the interceding church. So then, we can be people who are subjectively involved with His marvelous, wonderful Christ, who is not only

there but in us as the life-giving Spirit. So that we could be people who pray in a prayer, for the accomplishment of His goal, which is the building up of the Body of Christ for His expression.

[MM:] Dick, this reminds me of a story I remember one time with Watchman Nee, where I heard that someone had come to him and asked him, “you need to pray for this. You need to pray for this and you need to pray for this.” And Watchmen Nee was describing his feeling as this person walked away thinking, you know you need to pray for this and this, and he thought, “well, I can only pray that if that’s what the Lord’s burden is. I understand you want me to pray, but is the Lord burdened for these details that you are telling me? I can only pray if it’s a prayer in a prayer.

[DT:] That’s right. And Matt, that just touches the main point of God’s New Testament economy. His desire is that we would live in oneness with Him. You know even in Revelation 2:4 it says, “I have one thing against you, you’ve left your first love.” The main thing the Lord desires since He went through death and resurrection, became a life-giving Spirit, He’s in the heavens on one hand, He’s in our spirit on the other hand, the main thing that He desires is that we would live in union with Him. He is mingled with us, we are mingled with Him. Now we need to live in oneness with Him. So that, what He’s doing, we are doing. And it’s possible, because He is the subjective, experiential, lovable, huggable, kissable, wonderful, experimental, life-giving Spirit, who’s mingled with us in our spirit. So, the main point here is that the difference between the Old Testament view and the New Testament view, of that the human level and the divine level, is that God is outside of us, He’s objective on the human level, and the Old Testament level. That’s the tone, the level, the taste. But in the New Testament, this wonderful Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, and He is so subjective and experiential, and He is mingled with us in our spirit. So His desire is that moment by moment, day by day, we would always open to Him and be in union with Him, particularly by telling Him, “Lord Jesus, I love You. Lord, I open my whole being to You.” Why do we pray this way? So that we could be one with Him. And then we are people who can pray in a prayer, His will becomes our will, we’re just in this wonderful union. That’s what the Lord really desires... is this marvelous, organic union.

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