

## **Excerpts from Life-Study of James, Message 11**

### **Practical Virtues of Christian Perfection (11)**

#### **Bible Verses:**

**James 5:7** Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.

**James 5:8** You also be long-suffering; establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near.

**James 5:11** Behold, we call those who endured blessed. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen his end from the Lord, that the Lord is very tenderhearted and compassionate.

After the parenthetical section in 5:1-6, we have a word concerning awaiting the Lord's coming with long-suffering (vv. 7-11). This also is a practical virtue of Christian perfection.

In 5:7 James says, "Therefore be long-suffering, brothers=", until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the

farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.” The Greek words for long-suffering in these verses are makrothumia (noun, as in Heb. 6:12; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:20) and makrothumeo, as in James 5:7-8. Long-suffering connotes patience toward persons, such as the patience the prophets had toward those who persecuted them (v. 10).

The Greek word for coming in 5:7 is parousia and means “presence.” Christ’s coming will be His presence with His believers. This parousia will begin with His coming to the air and end with His coming to the earth. Within His parousia, there will be the rapture of the majority of the believers to the air (1 Thes. 4:15-17), the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), and the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).

In 5:8 James continues, “You also be long-suffering; establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near.” While we are awaiting with long-suffering the Lord’s coming, He, as the real Farmer (Matt. 13:3), is awaiting with patience our maturity in life as the firstfruits and harvest of His field

(Rev. 14:4, 14-15). Our maturing in life can shorten the period of our long-suffering and His patience.

In verse 11 James says, “Behold, we call those who endured blessed. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen his end from the Lord, that the Lord is very tenderhearted and compassionate.” In this verse endured and endurance are translations of the Greek words *hupomeno*, verb, and *hupomone*, noun, as in Romans 5:3 and 2 Corinthians 1:6. This endurance connotes patience toward things, such as the patience that Job had toward the things that afflicted him.

It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord’s coming back, we need to grow in life. Most Christians today view the Lord’s coming in an altogether objective way, in a way that has nothing to do with our spiritual condition or spiritual growth. Their expectation is that one day the Lord will suddenly come and that His coming will have nothing to do with their maturity. It may be that the concepts many Christians hold regarding the Lord’s coming back are actually causing Him to delay His coming.

The illustration of the farmer in 5:7 implies that the farmer is waiting for the crop growing in the field to ripen. According to Revelation 14, the Lord is also waiting for the harvest to be ripe. When the harvest in the field is ripe, He will come back. This harvest will be the issue, the outcome, of the Lord's sowing of Himself as a seed. This was accomplished during the Lord's first coming, and it is described in Matthew 13. We need to realize that it is the ripening of the harvest that will hasten the Lord's coming back.

We need to realize that the Lord's coming is related to our growth in life. If we fulfill the condition of growing in life, the Lord will fulfill the condition of coming back sooner. Therefore, we need to grow in life, and as we are growing, to exercise long-suffering and endurance. This is the proper way to await the Lord's coming back.

Earlier in this message we pointed out that the Greek word for coming in 5:7 and 8 is *parousia*, which means "presence." The Lord's *parousia* will last for a period of time, at least three and a half years, the length of the great tribulation. The *parousia* is likely to begin a little earlier than the tribulation, and it may conclude a little before the end of the great tribulation. It is very

difficult for us to know when this will be, because the Lord Jesus has said that only the Father knows the time of His coming. This means that the time of the beginning of the Lord's parousia is a secret kept confidential in the Father's heart. But according to the study of prophecy in the Scriptures, we can say that the parousia will begin a little earlier than the start of the great tribulation.

Most Christians do not understand the Lord's coming as being a matter of the parousia, His presence over a period of time. Instead, many believers think that the coming of the Lord will be somewhat like an accident. Actually, the Lord's parousia will last for a period of time. According to James's word, we need to await the coming of the Lord, His parousia, with long-suffering and endurance. Furthermore, as we are waiting, we need to grow in life unto maturity.

*Read the verses and footnotes online: <https://text.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]: Most Christians today view the Lord's coming in an altogether objective way, in a way that has nothing to do with our spiritual condition or our spiritual growth. Their expectation is that one day the Lord will suddenly come, and that His coming will have nothing to do with their maturity. It may be that the concepts many Christians hold regarding the Lord's coming back are actually causing Him to delay His coming. This is Matt Miller with Ron Kangas. Welcome back into the studio, Ron.

[RK]: Good to be back. I appreciate especially your latter comment that the concepts many Christians hold regarding the Lord's coming back are actually causing Him to delay His coming. This is worthy of consideration. I feel there's a need on this matter to speak quite frankly and honestly to the Christian public. A great many Christians are drugged and stupefied by superficial, elementary, incomplete, and inaccurate teaching concerning the Lord's coming, and that stupefaction is worsened by this booming industry of Christian fiction related to the end times. And the effect of teaching, the preaching, the fiction, is to make Christians curious about the events, as if they were not curious enough already. To give them the false assurance, especially the pretribulation rapture people, that no matter what their spiritual condition is, no matter what their degree of growth in life is, everybody is going up before the tribulation starts. Everyone gets a free ticket. And the reason I speak this way is that my heart is quite exercised over how this kind of concept, which has its source in the teaching and preaching, how this hinders God from carrying out His economy, how this frustrates Christians from growing in life. So, let's set forth the main idea here, as it relates to this program. There is a direct correlation between the rapture of the believers and their maturity in the divine life. Not everyone goes at the same time. No farmer with an orchard harvesting peaches say, "We'll indiscriminately pluck all the peaches from all of these trees simply because they're peaches and it's harvest time." The harvesting of the peaches is related to their ripeness, and to use this illustration is not far off, because the Lord likened Himself to a Sower sowing the seed in His field, which grows to maturity to harvest. This is developed further in Revelation 14, where the first fruits are taken before the general harvest. Why are the first fruits taken first? It's because they mature first, and they're ripe first, so they're harvested first. Next, we would like to say something to the Christian listeners generally, and then to the preachers and Bible teachers particularly. To the believers generally, we would encourage you to reread the New Testament at least reread the verses that speak of the Lord's coming and our being taken to be with Him and to consider what is presented in our publications, to see if it is time for you to reassess what you've taken in. That's an invitation. The preachers and the Bible teachers, they need a challenge. And we in a spirit of love, but in frankness and honesty, challenge your teaching as being not fully in accord with the totality of the New Testament revelation. We're in the book of James. Why do I say this obvious thing? Because James, in one of his many good points, says not many of us should be teachers. Don't aspire a lot of you to be teachers. Those who teach will be judged with greater severity. To be gullible or simple or naive and take in this notion of an indiscriminate rapture of all believers, no matter what their spiritual condition is, that's one thing. But to teach that, to preach that, to make an industry out of books concerning it, that's a big responsibility. We realize this is not an item of the faith. We don't fellowship with the believers based upon their eschatology. That's not something of the common faith, and we will not

dispute with this in a way that would lead to division and discord. But as lovers of the Lord and lovers of the truth, we need to speak from our heart and from our spirit to the Christian public. Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, many of you are being misled by inaccurate teachings concerning the Lord's coming, and by teachings that do not connect as the Bible does, the Lord's coming with our being ready. Some may say, and I've heard people say, I'm ready. I'm ready because I'm a believer. But readiness, according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, involves something more than simply believing in Him and being a child of God. It means you have grown in life. You are living to the Lord. You are mature in life. You are ready to be with Him. So, I say all of this mainly in response to your word that the concepts that many Christians hold are actually causing Him to delay His coming. Why does that contribute to delay? Because it frustrates the growth in life. And if there's not the growth in life, there's no Bride ready. Is the Lord going to come back and marry a child bride, a little girl? The bride who matches him as his counterpart, has to have the stature, the maturity, the growth, the development, and so we're taking all this time at the opening. I wouldn't say plead, but to implore our listeners, have an open mind. Be willing to reconsider. Re-read the New Testament. Consider our ministry of publications on this matter, in prayer before the Lord. That's all we ask. We have been faithful to present our understanding of the truth. We ask you to be open. If you agree, that's fine. If you don't agree, that's also fine. We still love one another and receive one another because God and Christ have received us. This is not an article of faith, but there's an eschatological industry, symbolized, I would say, by the Left Behind series. Now we have the prequel to the Left Behind series. The effect of these tens of millions of books is to hinder believers from seriously seeking the Lord and preparing themselves for His coming, and when he does come, many will be shocked that only the mature, only the first fruits, will be raptured first.

[MM]: Ron, we've come in our life study of James today to our ninth program, which is covering the printed message number 11. And obviously in this we're going to touch the Lord's coming, because James talks about that in chapter five, and he does talk about the Lord coming as a farmer. So, everything you've said is a good introduction to what Witness Lee is going to talk about today. One other verse that I couldn't help but think of, as you were sharing, about our hastening the coming of the Lord is Peter in his second epistle, the third chapter. He referred that we could hasten the coming of the day of God. So, there is the ability for the believers to hasten the coming. But the flip side of that, if we wouldn't mature, we could delay the Lord's coming.

## **Part I**

[MM]: Well, Ron, we've done it already, but let's go back to this matter of growth related to the Lord's coming.

[RK]: Yes, let's restate this as we consider this. Even though the portion from Brother Lee was brief, it was very focused. On the one hand, we may say, and Revelation 22 should encourage us to pray. "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!" Those who love not only the Lord but love His appearing should have this in their heart to pray. But if we're not enlightened by the truth concerning the various aspects of His coming, especially the requirement that the believers grow to maturity, some might innocently suppose that the Lord would say, "Okay, you want Me to come, I'll come tomorrow, or I'll arrange this or that to fulfill the prophecy objectively." But in brother Lee's direct and simple way, and I say simple with a sense of respect, he presents the Lord as saying, "My child, grow quicker. You want me to come quickly, I hear you, but in order for your prayer to be fulfilled, you have to grow quicker." And regarding growth as one serving the Lord, as a member of the Body, as a brother, as one participating in the Lord's ministry, I have a lot of burden here. The fact is, the vast majority of believers are not growing at all. It's not that they're growing slowly. They're not growing at all. But they may suppose that because they have more knowledge than they had before, or their behavior is somewhat better than it was before, or because they have some unusual, even miraculous or charismatic experiences that they didn't have before, this means they're growing. None of those things have anything to do with the growth in life. The growth in life is the increase of Christ within us. It's the spreading of the Holy Spirit in our being. Is Christ making His home in our heart? It's the

divine life developing according to second Peter one five through 11. So, this simple word grow quicker, conveys a lot. The Lord will not come back, and there will not be the rapture until at least the overcoming believers have grown to some degree of maturity. That's just the way it is. I don't know how to say it any more plainly than that. If Christians go on not growing or growing at a rate which is abnormally slow, the Lord will wait. But you know, you're a father. I'm a father of grown daughter and sons and now with grandchildren, we would not be blase if the little ones didn't grow. We would not comfort ourselves by saying, "Oh, it doesn't matter. The infant is not gaining weight. He's eight years old. He doesn't walk, he doesn't talk. He's 12 years old. He's still three feet two inches tall." We would be desperately concerned, because at the core, what we all want is just normal growth and development to maturity. This is what now I say the word pleading. We are pleading for on behalf of the Lord. The Lord will come back for a Bride. And this Bride must be ready, she must be mature, she must be grown in life. She must match the Lord. Otherwise, that would be a most uncomely marriage. Eve was the counterpart of Adam. God did not produce a little girl to be the wife of Adam, that's the type. The church as Christ's bride must match him in every possible way. And an important element of this is the growth in life for maturity. Fellow Christians grow quicker. If you want to be raptured, if you want the Lord to come back, if you want to be in the wedding feast, if you want to share in the coming Kingdom, you need to grow to maturity. The Lord requires this. The Bible reveals this, and we testify this.

[MM]: Ron, I'm going to read a verse and we're going to go back to one short portion with Witness Lee, and we're almost out of time, but let's do that. It's James 5:7, *"Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain."* Here's Witness Lee for the conclusion of today's Life-study.

## **Part II**

[MM]: Well, Ron, I really feel like we're touching the Lord's heart here today, and the Lord's really speaking in a fresh way, we've covered this matter of the growth in life now. How about a concluding word on this matter of long-suffering towards persecuting persons and the endurance toward the afflicting environments.

[RK]: This word is clear. The long-suffering is toward persons that are persecuting or troubling us. Endurance is toward the environment, toward hardships. But the main burden here is actually not to parse or to give a lexical definition of these words merely. But if we would consider what Peter says in Second Peter 1, when he describes the development of the divine life from the root, this is our Word of faith to the consummation of brotherly love, and love. We see past the midpoint self-control and endurance. Little children, humanly speaking, are not characterized by either long-suffering or endurance. We don't expect them to. That's why they say, "Are we there yet? Are we there yet?", when we're in the car. It is a sign of maturity and life to have long-suffering and endurance. The point here is that if we are to have the long-suffering and endurance recommended by James and required by the Lord, we have to grow in life. We're not talking about the natural human virtues of these that some of us have and others do not have to some extent. We're talking about the virtues of Christ becoming ours. We're talking about the fruit of the Spirit developing in us. As we are heading toward the end, we will need long-suffering and endurance. If we are to await the Lord's coming with long-suffering and endurance, we must grow in life. If we had the sense that we are growing in life, then we have the ground to pray, "Lord, come quicker. Look, I'm growing more quickly. Lord, You come quickly." That's a very sweet word. So, we are left with this point that we sounded in the beginning. The Lord's coming is directly and intrinsically related to the believer's maturity in life. The maturity in life to state the obvious requires the growth in life. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us seek the Lord. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord, and let us pray for the growth in life that we would have the long-suffering, that we would have the endurance, and that we would be ready to be taken as first fruits at the Lord's coming.



[MM]: Well, Ron, all I have time left to do is say a hearty “Amen” to that. Thanks for coming in and sharing your heart with us, and what's on the Lord's heart, I feel.

[RK]: You're welcome.

[MM]: Thank you for staying with us. We really feel like it's been a special time today.

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