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The Will of God

According to James

The Epistle of James

Table of Contents

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Chapter 1: The Divine Self-Revelation

Chapter 2: The Divine Transition

Chapter 3: The Divine Call to Action

Preface

If the letter written by James were the only document found in our Bible, how would we answer the following questions?

1. What does James reveal about God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) and His activity among us?
(The Divine Self-Revelation)
2. What does James reveal about God's activity in us?
(The Divine Transition)
3. What does James reveal about God's expectation of us?
(The Divine Call to Action)

These are the three questions that will be the focus of this study.

THE WILL OF GOD

(According to James

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Covenant Publisher

Corpus Christi, Texas

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(Revised 3/10/16)

Chapter 1

The Divine Self-Revelation

(Father, Son & Holy Spirit)

In the first section of this booklet, I will provide an overview of God's self-revelation in the epistle written by James. The reader will observe various activities in which Father, Son and Holy are involved in the life of the believer? These will be outlined below. To begin, note the emphasis placed upon Father in comparison with His Son and the Holy Spirit.

Divine Character	Times Mentioned
Father	31+
Son	3
Holy Spirit	1

Revelation and Activity of Father:

The epistle of James begins by reveal Father as a loving **master** (1:1). In verse 5, Father is portrayed as the **recipient of all prayer requests** (1:5). When in need of wisdom, we are instructed to ask Father. This may seem obvious, but there are those who direct their prayers to Jesus or the Holy Spirit. If our prayers are offered to Father in faith, they are granted. If we waver as we make our request, Father may refuse to award our plea. (1:7) Father desires that we believe **His good intentions**. He will not scold or ridicule us when we ask, but we must settle once and for all that He **wills the best for us**. We are to cast out any doubt regarding His kind affection toward us. He is not only aware of all the details of our life, but is also **intimately concerned for our well-being**. Settle this in your mind.

Father is further unveiled as the one who **rewards** those undergoing trials. He **promises a crown of life** to those who love Him and endure temptation (1:12). Remember, we are **never alone**. Father is **present and ready to strengthen and rescue** us when we are battered and bruised by the storms of life. Never assume that God tempts us with evil (1:13). Father's **heart is to bless**, not curse.

He is recognized as the **Father of lights**. He is the **giver of every good and perfect gift** (1:17). There is no变ability in Him. He is not going to change His **generous** nature. He is not like a shifting shadow. This truth should serve as a source of encouragement. We are informed that Father, the source of all blessing, is as generous today as He was 2000 years ago and that He fully intends to lavish every good and perfect gift upon us. I hope we are ready to receive, because He is ready to give.

He is also unveiled as a **personal** Father. He has given us **birth** through the agency of the Word of truth. His Word contains power to create. The Divine seed of His word has **brought forth life**. Father is now our creator and we have become the **new specimens of His new creation** (1:18). James informs the reader that the engrafted life-giving word is able to save our souls (1:21). The Word of God has both **generating and keeping power**.

James moves on to introduce us to the righteousness of God (1:20). Righteousness is defined by God's holy character and nature. As we review the pages of the Bible, we find various expressions of God's righteousness and character. The most prominent example is the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments are an expression of God's righteousness. Righteous living is defined as obedience to God's Word in thought, verbal expression and deed. When we align ourselves to God's Word, we are said to be righteous. Sin, on the other hand, is defined as breaking God's commandments in word, thought and deed.

The bad news is that the entire human race has failed to keep God's moral law and inherited both the wrath of God and curse of the law. Our disobedience has constituted us as unrighteous. Our guilt has caused us to become unworthy to stand in His presence. In fact, the entire human race awaits judgment because of its failure. How can we remedy this problem? How can we be moved from this state of unrighteousness to a state of innocence?

The good news is that Jesus Christ has rescued us from our predicament. He has **cancelled our sin debt** (violations of the law) by taking upon Himself our penalty of the law. He has pacified God's wrath, lifted the curse of the law, pardoned our sins, and removed far from us the fear of eternal judgment. Besides granting us all these benefits, His incredible work does not end here. As a human being, He lived a perfect life and became known as the righteousness of God. His righteousness (perfect law keeping) has now been transferred to us. We can now stand before God as a result of the **imputed righteousness of Christ** (also known as the righteousness of God). We do not keep the Ten Commandments to become righteous, we take pleasure in keeping them because we have been declared to be righteous. James informs the believers that wrath or human effort can never produce the righteousness of God. The Ten Commandments are an expression of God's love. When dealing with our conduct, righteousness is produced by obedience to God's Word, not an unleashing of man's wrath.

Father is further revealed as the one who **blesses those that look into and continue in the perfect law of liberty** (1:25). Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. We have been rescued from the bondage of sin caused by our violation of God's holy commandments. Father calls us to look into and continue in the perfect law of liberty. Now that we have been birthed by Father and are being kept by His power, we are to align ourselves with that moral law that liberates. The law is not to be a source of righteousness, but an expression of divine reality lived out by the believer. The desire to align ourselves to God's Word is a delight, not an imposition. The **new nature in us drives us to desire Father's will**. This alignment of our life and God's Word may be what James considers as doing the work. Those who practice God's Word are guaranteed Father's blessing (1:25)

Chapter one, comes to a close with a contrast between empty and true religion. Father **defines pure and undefiled religion**, not in theory, but practice. According to Father, religion should move men to action, not lip service (1:27). Religion consists of deeds, not words. Father outlines three genuine expressions of true religion:

1. Visit the fatherless
2. Visit the widows in their affliction
3. Keep yourself unspotted from the world

In chapter two, the reader is provided with various activities in which Father is involved in the life of the believer?

Father is not partial. He will not judge us according to outward appearance or social status, but according to the law of liberty. He will **show mercy** on those who show mercy. He will reveal judgment without mercy upon those who show no pity (2:12-13). He has taken the initiative to choose those who are poor in this world, but rich in faith (2:5). Those who measure others by outward appearance break the law of liberty and are guilty of sin. Father calls us to fulfill His royal law by taking heed to love our neighbors as ourselves. **Father will judge our actions** according to the law of liberty (2:8)

Father is pleased when our faith is accompanied by works. In fact, in the mind of God, faith without works is dead and unprofitable (2:19). The writer declares that there is **one God** and that the devils are aware of this fact. Faith without action is not sufficient as a testimony of belief. The devils believe there is one God, but their assent is not accompanied with righteous living.

Father is revealed as the one who **imputes righteousness** upon those that believe Him. **He calls us friends**. He honors those in any station of life who will embrace Him. The benefits of His love are extended not only to the wealthy Abraham (2:23), but to lowly prostitute named Rahab (2:25). Both possessed faith that was complimented by works. Both became recipients of God's righteousness.

In chapter three, Father is revealed as the only one who has the power to condemn those who curse the creature made in His similitude. Though He has power to condemn, He speaks well concerning us in Christ and His expectation is that we would use the power of the tongue in order to dispense blessing instead of cursing.

In chapter four, Father is unveiled as **the enemy of the world** (4:4). Those who would befriend God must defriend/unfriend the world. Father is the **giver of grace** (4:6). He **resists the proud** (4:6) and **lifts up the humble** (4:10). As lawgiver, He has **the power to save or destroy**. We are reminded that He **executes His plan after the counsel of His own plan**.

In chapter five, Father is revealed as the **Lord of the Sabbath** (5:4). He **attends to the prayer** of those who labor in the field and is concerned that they receive their wages. James unveils **Father as a judge** who stands before the door to set the record straight (5:9). The prophets have spoken in His name (5:10). Father is **full of pity and tender mercy** as evidenced in the life of Job (5:11). When we anoint the sick with oil in His name, He is the one **who heals** (5:15). When we utter the prayer of faith, He is the one who **forgives sin** and raises the sick.

Revelation and Activity of the Son:

Though his primary emphasis is Father, James also introduces Jesus. Alongside Father, Jesus is portrayed as a loving **master**. He is called the Lord of glory and is said to soon return. James lived with an expectation of witnessing the coming of God's Son.

Revelation and Activity of the Holy Spirit:

After speaking about Father and Son, James also makes reference to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is said to **indwell** the believer and is envious for us.

This epistle of James unveils a wonderful vision of God. God is a loving Father who is active among us. As Master, he rules the world. He hears our prayer and grants our petition. He is liberal with His wisdom and has good intentions toward us. He is intimately concerned for us and rewards those who endure temptation. He is present to intervene on our behalf when we struggle. As Father of lights, He is a generous giver of every gift. He has birthed us. His Work has both generating and keeping power. He imputes His righteousness to us. Though he judges our actions according to the law of liberty, He is full of mercy and calls us friends. Though he will not tolerate a divided allegiance, He gives grace. He resists the proud and lifts the humble. Though he has the power to save and destroy, He executes His plan according to the counsel of His own will. As Lord of the Sabbath, Father looks out for the interest of the laborer. Father hears the prayer of faith, forgives sin and heals the sick. Father is personal.

The Son is also portrayed as Master and soon to return. The Holy Spirit indwells us and longs to apply and make real in us all Father and Son have accomplished.

Chapter 2

The Divine Transition

Our condition prior to God's intervention?

According to James, prior to God's intervention, we were by nature enemies of and at enmity with God. We were known as adulterers and adulteresses. We were foolish, vain and reveled in our friendship with the world. We judged the law and transgressed it. We had fallen into condemnation, lived in confusion and entertained every evil work. We flaunted our wealth and lived for pleasure. Our riches corrupted us. We heaped treasure together for the last days and nourished our heart as in the day of slaughter. We had become self-deceived.

Our heart was filled with bitter envy and strife. We maintained a friendship with God's enemies. We oppressed the poor and blasphemed their worthy name. We dragged them before the judgment seat. We condemned the just and defrauded our employees of their wages.

Our tongue boasted of great things. We lied against the truth. We spoke evil of the law. Our tongue defiled our body. It was like a fire of hell and a world of iniquity. Our tongue was responsible for setting on fire the course of our own nature.

Our wisdom was devilish. It was earthy and sensual. Though we at times seemed to be religious, our practice was empty and we were in the process of fading away.

Our condition after God's intervention?

Though our condition was dark, God intervened to rescue us. God took the initiative and gave birth to us by means of the Word of truth. We were exalted to a new position. We became the new specimen of God's new creation. We became beloved brothers, servants and friends of God. We became known as wise and became indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As the new specimen of God's creation, our behavior was also affected.

When we are afflicted, we pray. When we are merry, we sing psalms. When we are sick, we call for the elders of the church. When we lack wisdom, we lift our petitions to God in faith. We now confess our faults to one another and experience the healing of God.

We cleanse our hands. We are slow to speak, quick to hear, and slow to anger. When we undergo tribulation, we rejoice and endure our trials because God is at work to perfect us.

Now that we are a new specimen of His creation, we draw near to Him. We are doers of the word and work of God. We submit and humble ourselves to Him. We now practice a religion that is pure and undefiled. We visit the fatherless and the widow in their need. We seek to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Now that we are a new specimen of His creation, we are blessed in our deeds. Through our works, God is making our faith perfect. We do not focus on the failure of the weak, but seek to restore

them. We convert those that err from the truth and thereby hid a multitude of sins. We refrain from offending others with words or to speak evil of the law. We are now endued with knowledge. We now establish our heart and fulfill the royal law. We love Father and have become heirs of His kingdom. We no longer swear by heaven, earth or any other thing. We now look into the perfect law of liberty and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Our lips now utter blessing to others. Our prayers avail much. We are patient unto the coming of the Lord. We are being made perfect, entire and lack nothing.

Now that we are a new specimen of His creation, we pray the prayer of faith for others. We purify our hearts. We remember the patience of the prophets and of Job. We now see that in the end – God secures justice for His people. We love Him. We are now rich in faith. We resist the devil and he flees. Our soul is being saved from death through His word. We now show our works out of a good conversation. We refrain from boasting about the future. We now utter, “If the Lord wills, we will stand and do.” We sow the fruit of righteousness in peace.

We are both hearers and doers of the word and work. We endure temptation and have been promised a crown of life. We suffer injustice and trust God to intervene. We rejoice in temptation because God uses everything that comes into our lives to perfect us.

Now that we are a new specimen of His creation, wisdom from above flows through us. Wisdom that is easy to be entreated. Wisdom that is full of good fruit. Wisdom that is full of mercy. We enjoy wisdom that is godly, heavenly, peaceable and pure. The wisdom that flows through us is without hypocrisy and partiality.

Chapter 3

The Divine Call to Action

Now that we have caught a glimpse of God's self-revelation in the epistle written by James and have seen the transition we have experience as a result of God's work, it is important to understand that we are called to action. God does not call us to become hearers, but doers. We are not called to empty religion, but to a pure and undefiled religion of action. As we enjoy the presence of God, His life, blessing and power will flow through us.

What actions are we called to carry out? We are called to carry out positive activities and avoid certain negative behaviors.

Positive Actions to Which We Are Called:

As a new specimen of God's creation, we are called to certain positive actions. When we are undergoing trials, we are to **count it all joy**. God is at work. He will use the temptations we face in order to produce something positive in our life. Our trial of faith will produce patience which will in turn make us perfect and complete. We will lack nothing. If we are confused concerning the ordeals we are facing, we are to **ask Father-God for wisdom**. We must **ask in faith** to ensure that our request will be granted. (1-8)

When God exalts us, we must **rejoice**. If we **endure temptations**, we will be blessed. If we **love** Father, He will reward our courage by giving us a crown of life. (12) We must **consider** the example of the prophets. They also suffered affliction. We must **imitate their patience**. We must **hear** and **see** the patience of Job and the Lord's end in his situation.

In light of the fact that we are a new specimen of Father's creation, we are called to **be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath**. Our wrath will never accomplish the goodness of God. (19)

We must **receive**, with meekness, the **engrafted Word**. We must **be a doer of the word**, not just a hearer. (22) As a new specimen of God's creation, we must **look into and continue in God's law** of liberty. **Practice** it. Our practice is God's work. We will be blessed in our application of the truth. (25)

After Father defines pure and undefiled religion, he calls us to practice. (26) Begin by **putting a bridle on your tongue**. (27) **Speak wisdom** that is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruit without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Your faith must be accompanied by works.

Practice pure religion by taking the following action:

- **Visit** the fatherless
- **Visit** the widows in their affliction
- **Keep yourself** unspotted from the world

Love your neighbor and fulfill the royal law. When you **make a promise, keep it**. **Bless** those who are made in the similitude of God. **Demonstrate** through your good conversation your works of meekness. Do not forget to **sow the fruit of righteousness** in peace. **Submit to God** and **resist the devil**.

Draw nigh to God and cleanse your hands. **Purify and establish your heart.** **Humble yourself** in the sight of the Lord.

If you are afflicted, **pray**. If you are merry, **sing songs**. If you are sick, **call the elders** and have them utter the prayer of faith. In fact, have them anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord. **Confess** your faults and pray for each other. If someone strays from the truth, **convert** him. By doing so, you will save him from the error of his ways. You will also save his soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.

Negative Activity we are to Avoid:

As new specimens of God's creation, there are certain negative activities that we are to avoid. We are to **lay aside** filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. When we pray, we are to **avoid** being unstable by making a prayer request in doubt. **Do not** make the mistake of accusing God of tempting us with evil. Many of the temptations we face are brought about by our own doing (14-15). In our dealing with others, remember to **practice the faith** of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Avoid** becoming a judge of evil thoughts by showing preference on the basis of racial and social standing. **Do not** become a transgressor of the law by despising the poor, committing adultery or being guilty of murder.

Ensure that you **do not** offend others in word. **Do not** let cursing proceed from your mouth. **Do not** glory in boasting about the future or lie against the truth. **Do not** swear. **Do not** allow your lips to utter wisdom that is earthly, sensual and devilish. **Do not** speak evil of or grudge against one of another.

Do not allow bitter envy and strife to creep into your heart. These will produce confusion and every evil work. If you have employees, ensure that you **do not** defraud them in regard to their wages. God hears their prayer.

Select your friends wisely. **Do not** be a friend of the world otherwise God will become your enemy. Ensure that you **do not** live in pleasure while on the earth. Again, do not be a forgetful hearer. Ensure to put to practice these things. You will be blessed for doing so.

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey

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