

Crystallization-Study – Epistle of James

Its Stress – Christian Perfection

The stress of the Epistle of James is **Christian perfection**. Job's perfection was before the law, and Saul's perfection was under the law. James was a person with one foot in the age of law and the other in the age of grace. This is the perfection of James, but **this is not the genuine Christian perfection** revealed in the entire New Testament. **The genuine Christian perfection is purely under the absolute grace of God.**

Virtues

- Counting it all **joy** whenever **falling into trial** and **enduring it by faith** with the hope of receiving the promised crown of life
- Asking of God in faith for wisdom to know how to be perfect.
- **Rejoicing** of the lowly brother in his exaltation and of the rich brother in his being brought low.
- Resisting temptation.
 - We need to resist temptation by God's good giving and gifts and by the virtue of God's regeneration, which is with the word of truth to produce the firstfruits of His creatures.
- Receiving **in meekness** the implanted word.
- Having no respect of persons by not dishonoring the poor and by not regarding the rich.
 - The commandment of the law of letters was crowned by James, because to him it was the royal law.
 - In the New Testament we should live according to the **law of life**, not according to the law of letters.
- Being justified by works, not by **dead** faith, in supplying the daily necessities of the needy ones.
 - James says that we need to have the works after we have the faith, just as Abraham and Rahab did.
- Not stumbling in word by bridling the tongue.
- Not cursing **man**, whom God made **according to His likeness**, by the mouth with which one blesses the Lord.
- Behaving in wisdom.
- Dealing with pleasures, the world, and the devil by loving God, by the **indwelling Spirit** given by God, and by the grace given to the humble.

- **Confiding** not in self-will but **in the Lord**.
- Awaiting the Lord's coming with long-suffering
- Taking the prophets and Job as examples in suffering evil with endurance.
- Speaking honestly without swearing.
- Turning back the brother led astray from the truth.

All the above implying seven factors

- All good giving and every perfect gift.
 - **James 1:17** – All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow cast by turning.
- The begetting by God, the Father of lights, to be the firstfruits of His creatures
 - This is God's regeneration.
 - **James 1:18** – He brought us forth by the word of truth, purposing that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.
- The word of truth.
 - The law is the word of God, and the word is the truth.
- The implanted word.
- The scripture.
 - **James 2:8** – If indeed you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well;
- The indwelling Spirit of God.
 - The top factor stressed by James is the indwelling Spirit of God.
 - **James 4:5** – Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain: The Spirit, whom He has caused to dwell in us, longs unto envy?
- The grace given by God.

The Means by Which the Christian Perfection Stressed by James is Carried Out

- Faith
 - Faith is one of the means of Christian perfection stressed by James, but in the entire New Testament the means is much higher than this.
- Wisdom given by God to know how to be perfect
 - James speaks of the wisdom given by God, **not to know how to fulfill God's eternal economy but to know how to be perfect**.
 - This is a **low wisdom** according to perfection in behavior.

- The crown of life.
 - **James 1:12** – Blessed is the man who endures trial, because when he has become approved by testing, he will receive the **crown of life**, which He promised to those who love Him.
 - This may be the highest among the means stressed by James for Christian perfection.
- The (perfect) law (of freedom)
 - The law James speaks of in chapters 1, 2, and 4 refer to the law of Moses, the **law of letters**.
 - At the time of James he had not come to know the law of life. Today we do not consider the law of Moses as a means by which we can carry out Christian perfection.
- The promised kingdom of God.
- The judgments of God.
 - God's judgments were a means spoken of by James to carry out perfection because **the judgment of God warns people**.
- The examples of the Old Testament: Abraham, Rahab, the Prophets, Job, and Elijah.
- The **likeness of God** according to which man was made.
 - **James 3:9** – With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made according to the likeness of God.
 - James points out that **although man is sinful, he still bears the likeness of God**. This is a kind of incentive to help us not to curse, so to James this was a means of Christian perfection.
- Confiding in the Lord
- The Lord's coming back
 - **James 5:8** – You also be long-suffering; establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near
 - **When we think about the Lord's coming back, we will behave properly**. His coming back is a means of carrying out Christian perfection in the book of James.
- Prayer
- Probably the cultivation of man's natural "bright virtue" created by God, thus becoming the cultivation of man's self
 - What James mentions is very close to Confucius's teaching, and that teaching is to develop, to promote, the conscience by the natural man, the self.

- The virtues of **James's perfection** are **not produced by God as our supply** but are produced by the cultivation of the natural bright virtue.

The Functions of the Christian Perfection Stressed by James

- The function of the kind of perfection of James cannot serve the fulfillment of the eternal economy of God. Instead, it functions to:
 - Make oneself perfect in living a pious life
 - Benefit others
 - Glorify God
 - In James' sense, glorifying God is to have good behavior among men.

(Crystallization-Study of the Epistle of James – Message 1)