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Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "Perfect Honesty Always Pleases God" (1978). *Vaught Sermon Notes: James*. 12.
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PERFECT HONESTY ALWAYS PLEASES GOD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 42
JAMES 5:12-13

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JAMES 5:12-13 "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

We have been in a study of reversionism. First in this chapter, we studied monetary reversionism and now for a number of verses, we have been studying verbal reversionism. God is a God of perfect truth and integrity and he holds up standards of truthfulness and nobility for us also.

JAMES 5:12 "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." The little particle "de" is used here to show that the discourse on verbal reversionism is now to be continued. Next we have "above all things" and it should be translated "before all things." Next we have "my brethren" so we know this is addressed to believers. "Swear not" is from "omnuo" and it means to make a promise with an oath. It really means that we are not to cover up a lie by putting an oath with it. Something like the statements "God is my witness this is true" or "As sure as God lives, this is true." This "swear not" says that we are to stop making promises with an oath. We are to stop using the name of God to cover up a lie. This "swear not" is the present, active, imperative and it means that we are never to do this. Don't do it now and never do it.

So look what we have thus far in this verse--"And before all things, members of the family of God, stop making promises and fronting it with an oath." Therefore, this statement presents to us the reversionist and his victim. The real victim here is the pastor-teacher, as we saw in some previous verses and he is the victim because his authority has been rejected.

Look At These Amazing Oaths

Our verse now says that we are not to swear "neither by heaven." So we see here that the reversionist is using God as a front. So many people want to impress you that they are telling the truth and along with the statement they make, they will say, "So help me, God," or "God is my witness." Many people want to make their position a little more sure and they want to convince you that they are telling the truth, so they will add, "God is my witness that I am telling the truth." Then we have another way of covering up. People will stand up in church when they want to make a point or carry their idea, so they will say, "I believe it is the will of God for us to do this." Of course, that is merely an opinion, and when an opinion is expressed as an absolute, quite often, it is a lie. So, people use all kinds of expressions to present what they think is the truth, when all the time it is merely an opinion which may or may not be true.

"Neither By The Earth"

This means that the one who is trying to impress you with the truth will now bring in someone of prominence, and drop names that usually sound impressive; like "Billy Graham believes this way" or "The Pope said so and so."

"Neither by Any Other Oath"

This might be like some statement like, "I swear on a stack of Bibles that this is true" or "I swear on my mother's grave that I didn't do that." Often we will say to little children, "Cross my heart and hope to die if this is not true." Of course, usually the one making a foolish statement like that has no idea of what death really is. So this verse 12 is saying here that all the ways of proving the truth are unnecessary and not worthy of the conduct of a Christian. All of these ways of swearing are attempts to cover up, attempts to impress others, and to take people's eyes off the actual facts.

Not Talking About Profanity

This verse here has no reference to profanity. The issue here is not profanity, but the issue is honesty in the soul as it is expressed in human language. One of the signs of reversionism is dishonesty. Many people use lies as a sham and pretense and this is exactly what this verse is saying. Since the whole system of reversionism is based on fraud, this is just another way the reversionist has of expressing what is in his soul. This verse says to the believer that this extra swearing is unnecessary. It is not necessary for the believer to use all these methods to try to impress others that he is telling the truth. (Illustration--One of our men has been unusually successful in a certain business and I asked another of our men this question--"Why do you think this man has been so successful?" He replied, "Because he is a man of his word and he works hard. When he tells anybody something and tells them that he will do the job in a certain way, then they know that is true." You see, truth doesn't need any props. It always stands by itself.)

A Summary

The believer who is learning doctrine and is moving toward super grace is honest in his soul. Doctrine in the soul always results in a life of honor. Super grace is characterized by honesty and nobility. Nobility is never related to lies. It was the Devil who fell from his high position and he fell through lying and deception. When Satan came to the woman in the garden, he said, "The wages of sin is not death as God has told you. God is just pulling the wool over your eyes. God is just trying to protect his power and is really not telling you the truth. In fact, God doesn't want you to become as wise as he is." This kind of conversation really appealed to the woman and she ate of the forbidden fruit and then she found out how brilliant she really was. So, a man can have nobility of soul, but he can't have it apart from perfect truth.

Now in this verse we have a second "de" and it is used here to show a contrast. It is the contrast between reversionism and super grace. "Let be" is the present, active, imperative of "eimi" and it means "Keep on being." It is a command to perpetuate something. It says that it ought always to be this way and there are no exceptions. It actually says, "Let it always be this way." Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Yes and no is all you need if your life is characterized by truth. You don't have to try to impress people by adding to your yes or your no. This is an idiom that demands honesty and straight thinking and nobility of soul.

Partial Truth

Quite often we make false impressions by leaving out something, or by adding something. This verse eliminates all of that. This is true of all the great issues in our government today. Even in government, we need never step away from perfect truth just in order to try to impress others.

Operation Patsy

This leads to another area of dishonesty and we call it "operation patsy." We blame someone else for our faults or our laziness or our lack of courage. When we fail it is so easy to lay it on someone else and thereby conceal the whole truth. Quite often we play to the galleries and we attempt to please others. Quite often we will do this even when it causes us to fail to stand for what we know is right. So, let "yes be yes and no be no" and this is God's demand for absolute honesty. Don't try to add to the truth. This is an idiom and tells us that we are to be honest. It says in substance this: stop pretending, stop posing to be something you are not. Take off your false face and superficiality and be absolutely honest.

Honesty Demands Knowledge

In order to be honest, you have to know the facts. So this is a command for us to learn the facts of Bible doctrine so we can stand on them anywhere and anytime. We are to avoid dishonesty and stay with absolute honesty. There is only one celebrity in the Church Age and that one is Jesus Christ and there are many super grace heroes. But when a super grace hero gets careless with the truth and starts adding to the truth, he quickly falls from super grace into reversionism. Next we have the words "Hina me" and it is translated "lest." It really means "that you not." Then we have the aorist, active, subjunctive of "pipto" and this means "that you not fall." This refers to the person who has fallen from super grace to reversionism. This is the reversionist coming under discipline. This is a culminating aorist. We have had quite a number of constantative aorists in this verse warning us on what we are not to do and now we have come to this culminative aorist and it simply means the axe is about to fall and condemnation will come.

The Same Every Time

This is the same road the reversionist travels every time. They go negative toward doctrine, then scar tissue begins to build up on the soul and then discipline comes from God. This will eventually lead you to the sin unto death, and from this, there is no repenting or rebound. This condemnation is divine discipline. The words are "hupo krisis" and it means under judgment. "That you not fall under divine discipline." This takes us back to the beginning of this chapter when we studied monetary reversionism. Now we are in the midst of verbal reversionism. At this point, God begins to knock at the door and if the reversionist doesn't hear, then God moves in with judgment.

REVELATION 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

This is a verse not about evangelism but about reversionism. We must have fellowship with the Lord if we are to go in the right direction. Divine discipline will come if that knock at the door is not heard. Positive volition toward Bible doctrine will cause you to avoid such punishment.

In verse 14 we will see the loss of health. Then we will see the possibility of the sin unto death in verse 15. Finally we will see the death of a nation in verses 17 and 18.

A literal translation of this verse.

"And more important, before all things, members of the family of God, stop making promises with an oath; neither by heaven (Don't use God as a front for lies) neither by the earth, neither by any other oath. But let your yes keep on being yes and your no keep on being no, in order that you fall not into judgment."

In verse 13 we will study redeeming the time by prayer. We will see in this study how the prayer of one man literally saved a nation. We will also see how prayer is offered for one who is under the sin unto death. Then we will see how prayer is offered for a reversionist who is under discipline. Last of all, we will see the prayer for a nation in reversionism. So Revelation 3:20 is a warning to the reversionist and the shortening of one's life.

JAMES 5:13 "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Here is super grace. This pronoun "tis" refers to the super grace believers. The super grace believer here is suffering affliction. Then it says, "Keep offering prayer." This is the present, middle, imperative of "proseuchomai." This is a customary present and refers to that which habitually occurs. The super grace believer always prays, when he is sick and when he is well. The middle voice here indicates that the subject participates in the result of the action. The imperative mood is a command. A super grace believer can pray for himself and offer for himself the proper prayer at the proper time. This is a super grace believer functioning under his own priesthood. This is the super grace life that is self-sustaining. Next we have "Is any merry, let him sing psalms." This is the life of happiness. "Euthomeo" is the word for "Anyone merry?" This is the picture of a social situation, a situation filled with happiness. This is the time to live it up and to have a good time. "Sing psalms" is the present, active, imperative of "psallo." It means to sing and the musical instrument will carry you along whether you can carry a tune or not. Now that's the meaning of "psallo," and this is to sing with happiness and the instrument and the song leader will carry you along. "Psallo" is brought over from the Hebrew and this refers to good music and not like a lot of the stuff we have today that is called music. So this says, "Keep singing in the ecstasy of the moment, with full possession of your mental capacity." Here is prayer designed to lift you up in the time of need and here is singing to lift you into realms of genuine joy.

So this passage tells us there is a time for everything--
Let us close with these lines:

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."