

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY SERIES
HOW TO LIVE CONFIDENTLY
 JAMES 4:13-17

Authentic Christianity. That is the theme of this book we are studying.

This morning look at the elements of a confident life. One that operates well in any conditions. James describes it in 4:13-17.

1. **THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE IS NOT TO GATHER MONEY. v. 13**
2. **THE BREVITY OF MY LIFE IS PART OF GOD'S PLAN. v. 14**
3. **THE CONFIDENCE OF MY LIFE IS DOING GOD'S WILL. v. 15**
4. **THE DANGER OF MY LIFE IS GOING IT ALONE, WITHOUT GOD'S WAY (Humility) AND WITHOUT GOD'S WORD (the Bible). v. 16-17**

Authentic Christianity can operate in any setting. It thrives in good times or bad. A stirring record of how authentic Christians made it in the gulag prisons of the Stalinist Soviet Union speaks to this. Listen:

- An article which appeared in Christianity Today (June 21st, 1974) was describing the Christians in the former Soviet Union. In that article is a paragraph which beautifully illustrates this hope which changes life for all who are in Christ . A former criminal, Kozlov, later a church leader, writes of life in a Soviet prison:

Among the general despair, while prisoners like myself were cursing ourselves, the camp, the authorities; while we sought to end our lives of hopelessness we opened up our veins, or our stomachs, or hanged ourselves; the Christians (often with sentences of twenty to twenty-five years) did not despair. One could see Christ reflected in their faces. Their pure, upright life, deep faith and devotion to God, their gentleness and their wonderful manliness, became a shining example of real life for thousands.

That is authentic¹ Christianity, whenever and wherever it appears.

James 4:13-17

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";

¹ Steadman, *Authentic Christianity*, p. 156.

14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. NKJV

THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE IS NOT TO GATHER MONEY. v. 13

- **Note the Lord's opinion of someone who only lived for money:** Luke 12:16-21
Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." NKJV
- **Jesus chides the church at Laodicea** Revelation 3:17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— NKJV

THE BREVITY OF MY LIFE IS PART OF GOD'S PLAN. v. 14

- **Heart THE MECHANICAL PUMP AND THE HUMAN HEART:** What machine can compare with the human heart that pumps 100,000 times every day and has a work expectancy of over 70 years without shutdown for maintenance or repair? Who designed the heart?
- **Hemoglobin:** When² Paul bore testimony of the truth of the gospel to King Agrippa, the apostle threw down this challenge: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8) The fact that we will live again is no more incredible than the fact that we live at all. Think of the complexity of a single human body or even a single cell. One molecule of hemoglobin—the protein in blood that carries oxygen to every part of the body—contains 3032 atoms of carbon, 4812 atoms of hydrogen, 780 atoms of nitrogen, 4 atoms of iron, 880 atoms of oxygen, and 12 atoms of sulfur. All 9520 atoms have to be hooked to each other in a certain order and in exactly the right way - just to make one molecule essential to physical life.
- **JOB MIST**
 - Job 7:6-10 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. 7 O remember that my life [is] wind: mine eye shall no more see good. 8 The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no [more]: thine eyes [are] upon me, and I [am] not. 9 [As] the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no [more]. 10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. (KJV)
 - Job 8:9 (For we [are but of] yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth [are] a shadow:) (KJV)

² Phillips, *Philippians*, p. 152-53.

- Job 14:1-2 Man [that is] born of a woman [is] of few days, and full of trouble. 2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. (KJV)

THE CONFIDENCE OF MY LIFE IS DOING GOD'S WILL. v. 15

- **Borden of Yale:** William Borden³ came from a wealthy and privileged family, was a graduate of Yale University, and had the promise of a wonderful and lucrative career before him. But he felt a call to serve God as a missionary in China and left for the field even though his family and friends thought him a fool for going. After a short time away and even before he reached China, Borden contracted a fatal disease and died. He had given up everything to follow Jesus. He died possessing nothing in this world. But "Borden of Yale" did not regret it. We know this because he left a note as he lay dying in Egypt that said, "No reserve, no retreat, and no regrets." Like so many others, he found the service of Christ to be eminently reasonable and gained a lasting reward.
- **Paul in** 2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. NKJV
- **Jesus** John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. NKJV; John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. NKJV; So at the end of His life He said in John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. NKJV

THE DANGER OF MY LIFE IS GOING IT ALONE, WITHOUT GOD'S WAY (Humility) AND WITHOUT GOD'S WORD (the Bible). v. 16-17

- In May of 1995 as we left here to go to Rhode Island for the birth of Jeremiah, we stopped at Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Perhaps the most memorable part of that stop was not when the 9 month expectant sweet Bonnie got wedged into a tight and narrow part of the cave and couldn't go forward or backward. No, it was when they turned off the lights and in the blackness that immersed us in a sea of hopelessness to even find our hands. Then the guide said, "Now follow me closely and we will find our way out!"
- Have you found the guide who can get you through the labyrinthical maze of life? Will you take His hand and let Him lead you to heaven?
- An article which appeared in Christianity Today (June 21st, 1974) was describing the Christians in the former Soviet Union. In that article is a paragraph which beautifully illustrates this hope which changes life for all who are in Christ . A former criminal, Kozlov, later a church leader, writes of life in a Soviet prison:

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³ Boice, *Mind Renewal*, p. 70.

deep faith and devotion to God, their gentleness and their wonderful manliness, became a shining example of real life for thousands.

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□ Newton⁵ wrote,

Amazing grace-how sweet the sound-
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Newton never forgot God's mercy to him. Once a friend of Newton's was complaining about someone who was resistant to the gospel and living a life of great sin. "Sometimes I almost despair of that man," the friend remarked. "I never did despair of any man since God saved me," said Newton.

In his most advanced years Newton's mind began to fail and he had to stop preaching. But when friends came to visit him he frequently remarked, "I am an old man. My mind is almost gone. But I can remember two things: I am a great sinner, and Jesus is a great Savior." Certainly the mercy of God moved Newton to offer his body as a living sacrifice to God and to seek to please him.

In 1930⁶ one of the most famous of living authors was William Somerset Maugham. He was known as a novelist, a playwright, and a master of the short story. His novel, *Of Human Bondage*, was established as a classic, and his play, *The Constant Wife*, had been staged thousands of times.

By 1965, Somerset Maugham was ninety-one years old and fabulously wealthy. Royalties continued to pour in, despite the fact that he had not written a word in years. Shortly before Maugham's death, he was visited by his nephew, Robin Maugham, who later wrote an article describing the time they had together in his uncle's villa:

My whole life has been a failure.... And now it's too late to change. It's too late...." Uncle Willie looked up, and his grip tightened on my hands. He was staring toward the floor. His face was contorted with fear, and he was trembling violently.

Willie's face was ashen as he stared in horror ahead of him. Suddenly, he began to shriek. "Go away" he cried. "I'm not ready... I'm not dead yet... I'm not dead yet, I tell you!" His high-pitched, terror-struck voice seemed to echo from wall to wall. I looked round, but the room was empty as before. "There's no one there, Willie." Willie began to gasp hysterically (London Times, April 9, 1978).

Though Maugham was one of the *most* famous and feted men of his generation, when it was time for the reckoning, he found his life empty and worthless.

⁴ Steadman, *Authentic Christianity*, p. 156.

⁵ Boice, *Mind Renewal*, p. 56-57.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Behold the Lamb*, p. 129-30.

He found that he was afraid to die.

He had not found what God intends life to be.

Jesus wants to rescue us from empty lives and to give us freedom.

Jesus saw the desperate need of His creatures.

Jesus came to save us.

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