

## James Part 11

Control / Concede

*James 4:13-17*

*Memory Verses: 2 Corinthians 3:5*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

As we've looked at the book of James over the past 3 months, it is obvious that the major theme of this letter is how we as Christians are to put our faith into action. Faith works. **But it would have been just as acceptable to name this series; The Struggle Is Real! The struggle with the world and it's various trials. The struggle of whether to accept Godly wisdom and focus our lives on Him as the central figure of life, or to accept the world's wisdom and focus our lives on ourselves. The struggle with the flesh and it's many temptations. And, the struggle of our relationships with others; how we speak to them, our attitudes towards them, how to rightly judge them, and how we are to treat the with dignity and not discrimination. There are many things which we struggle with or war against in order to be who Christ created us to be.**

And, this morning, the struggle continues. Look with me if you would at **James 4:13-17**. As you can tell from the passage, this morning we are dealing with the struggle between our will and God's will; our dreams verses God's desires. It is the ever present struggle in our souls whether to hold on to control in our lives or to concede control of our lives to Christ. **As the great poet William Ernest Henley put it, "It matters not how strait the gate, How charge with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."** Well I hate to disagree with you Mr. Henley... but we are most definitely not the masters of our fate, and we are not the captains of our soul.

This morning it is paramount that we recognize, that we are not in control of our destinies, and we are not capable of steering our lives. Could you imagine driving your car blind folded? You would wreck before you even made it out of the parking lot. In the same way, we are not aware of what the next moment may bring. We are blind. Making plans, and following our desires without seeking directions from the one who can see all, is a foolish endeavor that will wreck our lives. Instead of being in control we most certainly need to relinquish control to a better captain; the one who can see the whole picture. We need to concede the wheel to Christ.

Perhaps you are here this morning and you are this morning and you have always felt in control. You do what you want, when you want, and no one can tell you different. That life comes at a price. We were meant to live in fellowship. We were meant to complement each other

and work together, submitting one unto another. When it's your way or the highway, you'll find yourself very alone. Or perhaps you are here this morning and you've made some very bad choices. You've realized that in trying to control your life, you've become out of control and you need someone else to take over. Or perhaps you are oblivious to the fact that you were never really in control in the first place. Or perhaps you know you are not in control but conceding control over to God bothers you a great deal.

Have you ever been to the grocery store with your kids and found one of those carts that look like race cars. It has little steering wheels for your kids, but a full cart for your food. The kids sit in the seats, thinking that they are driving the shopping cart all over the store, but in reality you are the one driving the cart. As soon as they realize you are driving, it kind of takes the fun out of it. I'm here today to let you know that even though you are not in as much control as you think you are, knowing God is in control or conceding control to him is not a bad thing. In fact, it's a very good thing. It's like being in an airplane crossing the ocean. I'm glad I'm not flying that plane. A, I don't know how to. B, I want to sleep and watch a movie. When God's in control its a lot safer, and a lot more relaxing.

Let me tell you a story about a fellow called Jack. One day Jack was out jogging by a cliff. As he was jogging he was looking at his phone and didn't notice that he was headed straight for a cliff. Just as he was about to run right off the side he looked up and was able to steady himself. But his momentum carried him over. As he was sliding down this very steep cliffside he was able to grab a small limb. If he were to let go he would most likely plunge to his death below. His only chance was for someone to lower him down a rope, so he started yelling; "is there anyone up there? Hello, I need some help, can anyone hear me?" Suddenly, to his great joy and surprise, someone yelled out, "yes, Jack, I can hear you. I can see you, Jack, are you alright?, "Yes, but, who are you, and where are you?" "I am the Lord Jack, I am everywhere." "The Lord? You mean God?" "That's me." "God, help me, I promise that if you get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person and serve you for the rest of my life." "Easy on the promises, Jack. First let's get you down, then we can discuss those." "I'll do anything, Lord, just tell me what to do, okay?" "Okay, let go of the branch." "What?" "I said, let go of the branch. Just trust me, let go." There was a long pause, as Jack thought of the offer. In a moment, however, Jack let out a loud yell. "Hello, Hello – is there anybody else up there?!"

Most of us are like Jack. We don't want to concede control over to God. We either feel that we can't trust him. Or we feel that we know better. But the truth of the matter is this... there's nobody else up there... and the sooner we realize that the better.

Today I want you to know this truth... **the sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living.**

## Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to recognize this morning is that... **Trying To Control Our Lives Leaves Us Disappointed**. Look again with me at **vs. 13-14**. We see here that there are two reasons that should make us want to relinquish control of our lives to Christ. The first one, in **vs. 13** is the complexity of life itself. Just think of all the things that are involved in living life; today, tomorrow, buying, selling, getting, losing, going here, going there. Think about all the different people, places, activities, goals, days, and years affected by the very crucial decisions we must make every single day. Now, apart from God all of this complexity rests on your shoulders alone – you must make every decision based upon your instincts, and world based wisdom. For the most part it's all just a big mystery and we are all just guessing, gambling, and hoping we make the right calls and get through in one piece, right? So why hold on to control?

When you surrender the control of these things to Christ, life begins to make a lot more sense – there's a lot less guessing to it. You see, in Christ there is a standard by which we can navigate life. There's a user manual; the Bible, there's a lifeline; prayer, there's a customer service team; the church. When you concede control to Christ you are no longer trying to live this very difficult life alone. Instead of spending your whole life trying to figure out how to live it, now you can spend your life actually living it the way Christ designed. **Life is much easier and much more enjoyable when lived according to God's plan**.

So, we concede control to Christ because of the complexity of life, and secondly, in **vs. 14a**, we concede control to Christ because of the uncertainty of life. This verse is based upon **Proverbs 27:1**. Isn't it ironic that anyone of us would make such large plans when we truly do not know what tomorrow will bring. Just think of what could happen; the stock market could crash, we could lose our jobs, we could go to war, there could be a global pandemic, we could get sick... we could die. To put so much stock in what tomorrow may bring when we do not have control over tomorrow is simply foolish. It's foolish to have such a confidence in our own plans saying; we will go, we will stay a year, we will buy and sell and make a profit. Is it possible that you will go? Yes. Is it possible you won't go? Yes. Is it possible you will stay a year? Yes. Is it possible you won't? Yes. But, the possibility of your whole 1yr plan working out the way you've planned it is not as great as you think.

It reminds us of the parable in **Luke 12:16-21**. Thou fool – tonight you will die. He had dreams, big 50 Cent dreams, to get rich or die trying, but they didn't come to fruition. Instead he was left very very disappointed. Think of those who jumped from sky scrapers on Black Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1929, because they had lost their life savings in the stock market crash. Listen, life is full of disappointments. How much

more disappointing is it when we are depending upon ourselves to achieve our own dreams and goals rather than Christ.

Look, when you surrender your dreams and goals to Christ and exchange them for his will and his desires for your life you have the assurance that what you are striving for is the right goal. When you concede the means to achieve those goals to the will and way of Christ you have the assurance that the way you are striving is the right way. Simply put, there are less disappointments when Christ is in control. Why? Because... **it's hard to be disappointed about things not going your way when the things you are doing are not in your own strength and the things you are striving for are not your goals**.

I had big plans for Stone Creek Church starting in January of 2020, but God had different plans. He brought a global pandemic, and stopped us in our tracks. Of course, a human response would be to shake a fist at God, get mad at how we couldn't do this or that, pout, and quit. But we didn't do that did we? Why? Because we've surrendered control of this church over to Christ. He's in charge and he can do whatever he wants with it whenever he wants. If we fail, we will fail knowing that as long as we are living in Christ, then it's on Christ. If we succeed, we will succeed knowing that we could only succeed in Christ.

Do you get it? If you in Christ's strength, fail to reach the goals Christ has set, then that's on Christ and not on you. Christ hasn't failed you... or himself... he's simply decided to go another route. In fact, the great thing about conceding control of your life to Christ is that all of your failures and disappointments can be seen as a part of God's will instead of your weaknesses. Life is all the more worth living under his control, because Christ doesn't let us down. And so, **the sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living**.

So, trying to control our lives will leave us disappointed because life is complex and uncertain. But, secondly, we need to recognize that... **Trying To Control Our Lives Is A Waste of Time**. Look again at **vs. 14b**. It's pretty clear; our lives are short – they are a vapor. We see this predominantly in the book of Job. **Job 7:6** tells us that our lives go by faster than a weaver's shuttle. **Job 8:9** tells us that our days are a but a shadow. And, **Job 14:1-2** tells us that our days are few and full of trouble, here today and gone tomorrow like a flower, just like a shadow.

And, that's why God tell us to number our days. Look at **Ps.90:12**. We must see that our time is short, and that our days are numbered, so that we will learn to use the time we have well. We must be urgent. **We must not merely spend our lives or waste our lives, rather we must invest our lives in eternal things**. When we spend our lives trying to be in control, trying to set certain goals for ourselves apart from God, trying to achieve those goals in our own strength, we are merely wasting it.

You see, God has plans for you. **Jeremiah 29:11**. And, he has the means to achieve those plans for you. You can spend your lives wasting it on your own goals, doing it your own way, or you can spend your lives investing it on God's goals, doing it his way. **The sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living.**

Trying to control our lives leaves us disappointed, wastes our lives on trivial pursuits, and, as we see in **vs.15, Trying To Control Our Lives Ignores God's Will**. In **John 4:34** Jesus says, "my food is to do the will of him who sent me." We should hunger and thirst for God's will. Like Olive Garden after a fast, it is that good! It is freeing, it is joyful, and it is most definitely better than living apart from it.

Look here, when we live according to God's plans we are better for it. When we avoid sexual immorality we will avoid unwanted pregnancies, STD's, abortions, and broken families. When we avoid lying we avoid broken relationships, losing people's trust, and possible lawsuits. When we avoid greed, jealousy, and stealing we avoid depression, discontentment, and jail time.

God's will is better for us, but sometimes we don't see it, sometimes we don't believe it. We want control. So, it's also important to have the right attitude concerning the will of God. Warren Wiersbe puts it like this; "Some people think God's will is a cold, impersonal machine. God starts I going and it is up to us to keep it functioning smoothly. If we disobey Him in some way, the machine grinds to a halt, and we are out of God's will for the rest of our lives. [But,] God's will is not a cold, impersonal machine. You do not determine God's will in some mechanical way, like getting a soft drink out of a vending machine. The will of God is a living relationship between God and the believer. This relationship is not destroyed when the believer disobeys, for the Father still deals with His child, even if he must chasten."

You see, when we get out of God's will its not the end. Yes, we will suffer for it, but **sometimes when we refuse to concede control to God, he will simply overrule**. So don't wait for him to overrule you... just concede and let him have control. The best way to live life is to live it within his will. **The sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living.**

Trying to control our lives will leave us disappointed, will be a waste, will ignore God's will, and lastly, **Trying To Control Our Lives Proudly Opposes Christ**. Look again at **vs. 16-17**.

How arrogant is it to boast that you are in control of your life? God can strike you down this instant. He can take away everything you have just like he did Job. For you to boast in what you have or what you

have done without recognizing that all you have and all you've done is only but by the grace of a benevolent God, is foolish. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** implores us to not boast; not the wise, the mighty, or the rich, but to boast in Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 3:5** reminds us that our sufficiency is from God alone.

Not only is it foolish to boast in our own doings, its also dangerous. Look at the warning in **Proverbs 16:5**. Pride is an abomination and it will be punished.

Listen, I truly believe that everyone on this Earth, whether a professing atheist or not, knows who's in control. Romans 1 tells us that we have natural revelation and a supernatural revelation telling us that there is a God and he's in control. Inside of every human is a intrinsic knowledge that the best course is to surrender control to God, and to concede to his will, ad yet we, in our flesh, will always want control, won't we? There is no greater war within us as humans, than the struggle of whether to concede control to God or to hold on to it, even to our dying breathe. It's an illusion. You aren't in control. So give it up! Stop ice skating up hill. Stop trying to go against what's inside your soul. Stop fighting against God's control because knowing what to do and not doing it is a sin. **The longer we try to hold onto to control the longer we are living in sin, and the longer we live in sin, the longer we aren't really living. The sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living.**

## Application

The longer we live under the illusion that we can be in control of our destiny, and be the masters of our fate, the longer we will live in a type of mental slavery. As Bob Marley sang in "Redemption Song," - "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery." Stop being help back from living the life you've always wanted but never could find. You'll find it by conceding control of you life to Christ. The longer you try to maintain control the more you will wreck things. Give God the wheel and just enjoy the ride.

## Conclusion

Ruth Haley Barton, tells a story about a monk she once encountered at a monastery in Colorado. As she was walking the grounds she saw a monk working alone in the vegetable garden. She squatted down beside him and said, "Brother, what is your goal in life?" He just looked straight at her, thought a moment, and then replied; "I would like to become a monk." She was a little surprised at his answer, "But brother, you are a monk, aren't you?" At that point he pulled out a gun from a holster under his robe, and said; "I've been here for 25 years, but I still carry a gun." It looked so strange, a monk carrying a gun. "So are you saying they won't let you become a monk until you give up your gun?" The monk replied; "No, it's not that. Most of them don't even know I have it, but that's not the point... I know." Okay, Ruth said, "Well then, why don't you just give it up?" The

monk responded; “I guess it's because I've had it so long. I've been hurt a lot, and I've hurt a lot of others. I don't think I would be comfortable without this gun.” Yes, Ruth said, “But you seem pretty uncomfortable with it.” The monk responded, “Yes, pretty uncomfortable, but If I give up my gun, I'm giving up the last vestige of control I have over my life.” That's when Ruth, prompted by the Holy Spirit, whispered “Why don't you give me the gun?” She was beginning to tremble. What happened next shocked them both. He did, he gave her the gun. His tears ran down to the ground and then he embraced her, and he said, “thank you, now I can live the life I was meant to live.”

It's time to be who God has created you to be.. it's time to concede whatever it is you are holding onto that is keeping God from having full control of your life. Only you know what that is. Perhaps it's a habit that you've had for many years, or a sin you've been hiding from everyone, or an addiction that has wrecked you, or a bad relationship that you need to get out of. Whatever it is... just like the monk, give it over to God so that you can live the life you were meant to live. **The sooner we concede control of our lives to Christ, the sooner we can start actually living.**