

DRYNESS THROUGH DUTY

James 4:6-10
September 19, 2010

INTRODUCTION: “Of the 37 years that my wife and I have been married, the three most difficult years in our marriage were those during which I set aside my calling as an itinerant evangelist and, at the request of my denominational leadership, took up a seminary professorship as my principle contribution to the work for the church. Going against my inner calling was difficult, and in the end I realized that when one is outside the will of God, one’s other commitments can also be put at risk and one’s most important relationships can become dry and lifeless. To be in the place where God wants you is indispensable to enjoying the blessings God offers.”

Has Christianity Failed You? – Ravi Zacharias

Is it possible to allow the “work of God around you to kill the work of God within you?”

In **1 Kings 17 & 18** Elijah knew his share of great victories, however, in **Chapter 19** he finds himself deep in the desert (wilderness).

So what happened?

Why is Elijah not celebrating his successes?

If Elijah can lose it, what does that say to lesser men and women?

It was a perfect storm. Three and a half years of intense ministry. Elijah went from a mountain top experience to a desert of discouragement. Daniel Darling, *The Superhero Mentality*, said, “*It’s the mistaken idea that activity for God is a worthy substitute for intimacy with God. Along the way, we begin to assume responsibility for results and act as if normal human weaknesses don’t apply to Christians.*”

And so God allows us who think we’re super-humans to come to the end of our abilities. Then He is there to receive with grace another burned-out prophet.

The Lord had to check Elijah into the “*shade-tree hotel*.” In **1 Kings 19:5** Elijah slept. An angel touched him and gave him a meal and then back to sleep. The angel came again and fed him, **v.6-7**. Later, the Lord took him to Horeb, the mountain of God, and it was here that he experienced the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire. He heard God in the “**still small voice**.” (a delicate, whispering voice)

Augustine said, “**You (Lord God) have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.**”

Amazing that the Lord did not ask Elijah to pray more, read additional Scripture, or build an altar; He brought food and gave him rest. Undoubtedly the One (our Lord) Who designed Elijah’s body knew its needs. Sometimes physical needs have to be addressed before we can minister spiritually.

What the Lord did in Elijah’s life revitalized him and equipped him for years of fruitful ministry.

NOTE: God wasn’t dependent on Elijah. God wanted Elijah dependent upon Him. Where the Lord finds Elijah is helpless, weak, and right where God wanted him.

Unfortunately, it often takes a meltdown of biblical proportions for us to come to this place.

At this point in my life, Kenny Wilson was used by the Lord to encourage me.

Psalms 9:10,

“And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

Spurgeon, “*There are times when all the promises and doctrines of the Bible are of no avail, unless a gracious hand shall supply them to us. We are thirsty, but too faint to crawl to the water-brook.*”

I. COMMENCES WITH A CONTRAST. 6

The “**therefore**” in this passage reminds us of the tendency of the readers to worldliness, selfishness, sinfulness, haughtiness, etc. Yet, it is as though the promise of **Romans 5:20b** is being magnified. “**But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.**” God gives a greater supply of grace.

A. THE LORD WILL RESIST THE PROUD.

The Lord sets Himself against the haughty, to be lined up against someone (no breakthroughs), to be arrayed in battle against.

Charles C. West, “*We turn to God for help when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that it is God Who is shaking them.*”

In being proud, we make ourselves enemies of God whom He resists. Barclay notes 3 things of this pride:

- 1. It does not know its own need**
- 2. It cherishes its own independence**
- 3. It does not recognize its own sin**

Kent Hughes wrote, “*The unbowed soul standing proudly before God receives no benefit from God’s falling grace. It may descend upon him, but it does not penetrate and drips away like rain from a statue.*” God’s grace will never mean anything to you while there is pride in your heart.

Remember, pride is the basic sin from which all others issue. Proud means to suppose oneself to be above others. One called it “*the citadel and summit of all evils.*” The real terror of this pride is that it is a thing of the heart.

B. THE LORD WILL ASSIST THE HUMBLE.

“more grace” – greater grace, more abundant grace. The same grace that initiates a believer into fellowship with God is able to sustain that fellowship in spite of the pressures of the world.

2 Corinthians 12:9, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

“grace heaped upon grace”

Augustine put it this way, *“God gives what He demands.”*

An artist once submitted a painting of Niagara Falls for an exhibition, but neglected to give it a title. The gallery, faced with the need to supply one, came up with these words: *“more to follow.”* Old Niagara Falls, spilling over billions of gallons per year, for thousands of years, has more than met the needs of those below and is a fit emblem of the flood of God’s grace. There is always more to follow.

John 1:16, “For in His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.”

“Sometime, struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If we were to go through life without any obstacles, we would be crippled. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. Give every opportunity a chance, leave no room for regrets.”

Unknown author

Do you need more grace?

1. *He gives grace to overcome personal weaknesses.*

Repeatedly succumbing to a burning pursuit of hedonism (pleasure seeking), God gives grace.

2. *Imploding self-centeredness which sucks you into its nothingness, God gives grace.*
3. *So stubborn that you have never lost an argument.*
4. *Such a knothed that you never listen to anyone.*
5. *Find your most intimate relationships are impaired, so that your spouse and friends find your presence a burden, but you want to change.*
6. *Have you fed on cherished hatreds , but now see them for what they are.*
7. *Your life has insurmountable obstacles; a terminal disease, death of a loved one, a shattering divorce, or bitter ashes of failure.*
8. *God calling you to sell all and go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel.*

“But gives grace to the humble” – undeserved favor to lonely people.

Psalms 138:6

“Though the LORD is on high,

Yet He regards the lowly;

But the proud He knows from afar. “

Annie Johnson Flint wrote:

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater;

He sendeth more grace when the labours increase;

To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,

To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,

*When our strength has failed ere the day is half done:
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
His love has not limits, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

II. CONTINUES WITH COMMANDS. 7-9

In v.7-10 James uses 10 imperatives; some positive and some negative, all middle voice. All call for immediate response; in a forceful and demanding way they call for action.

TESTIMONY: "I found myself leading on empty"

Unable to bounce back, felt spiritually, emotionally, mentally empty which affected me physically; I was drained.

"We won't be held accountable for how much we have done, but for how much we have done of what He has asked us to do."

"Long-term stress is a predecessor to depression. The constant expectation to come up with yet another inspiring message wears you out. It depletes your emotional system, reducing your ability to stay balanced. Long-term stress is not detectable in the beginning. It is well disguised by growing success, financial prosperity, or people's accolades. The numbing effect keeps you pressing forward, leading on empty, until the bottom falls out. Then

success is not longer your goal. Healing is.”

Wayne Cordeiro

A devotion from L.B. Cowman from Sept. 7th.

**Psalms 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.”**

“Why didn’t God help me sooner?” This is a question that is often asked, but it is not His will to act on your schedule. He desires to change you through the trouble and causes you to learn a lesson from it. He has promised, **“I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.” (Psalms 91:15)** He will be with you in trouble all day and through the night. Afterward, He will take you out of it, but not until you have stopped being restless and worried over it and have become calm and quiet. Then He will say, *“It is enough.”*

“God uses trouble to teach His children precious lessons. Difficulties are intended to educate us, and when their good work is done, a glorious reward will become ours through them. There is a sweet joy and a real value in difficulties, for He regards them not as difficulties but as opportunities.”

*Not always out of our troubled times,
And the struggles fierce and grim,
But in, deeper in, to our sure rest
The place of our peace in Him.*

Annie Johnson Flint

“When God tests you, it is a good time to test Him by putting His promises to the test and then claiming from Him exactly what your trials have made necessary. The other is to recognize the

trial as a challenge from God to claim a larger blessing than we have ever before experienced and to accept it with delight as an opportunity of receiving a greater measure of God's divine grace. In this way, even the adversary becomes a help to us, and all the things that seem to be against us turn out to assist us along our way."

A. B. Simpson

Ps 4:1 (KJV), "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." The Psalmist is declaring that the sorrows of life have themselves been the source of life's enlargement.

Did the Lord send **warnings** of my condition of leading on empty?

- 1. Timothy & Barnabas was born out of Ps 37:4
"Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart."**
- 2. Mens Conference was an answer to prayer.**

These ministries brought top leaders to me in order that I not have to travel to them. I broke my promise.

- ◆ Stress attack in my office
- ◆ Cancer surgery (was the Lord attempting to get my attention?)
- ◆ SBC/GCR (on overload) Adrenaline/endorphins, kept me rising to the expectation of others, and my own

Over the last 6 weeks or so I have been reminded that one will not change until "*the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of change.*"

"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle, I just wish He didn't trust me so much."

Mother Teresa

Psalms 69:1-3

**Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire,
Where there is no standing;
I have come into deep waters,
Where the floods overflow me.
I am weary with my crying;
My throat is dry;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God”**

“Sorrow comes to all. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better and yet you are sure to be happy again.”

Abraham Lincoln

“How few there are who have courage enough to own their faults, or resolution enough to mend them.”

Benjamin Franklin

“The ministry is a matter which wears the brain and strains the heart, and drains out the life of a man if he attends to it as he should.”

Charles Spurgeon

Most of us are all too familiar with **Romans 8:28 & 29**

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

God is working all things together for our good and His glory, whether we call it tribulation or not, in order to mold us into the image of His Son. It takes difficulties to make us like Christ.

BACK TO THE 10 IMPERATIVES:

A. CONSECRATION. 7-8a

1. SUBMIT. 7

Passive form indicates the submission to it be voluntary. Submission is not the same as obedience; instead, it is the surrender of one's will, which leads to obedience. The **"therefore"** in v.7 reminds us that if the believer is unwilling to submit to the control of God in his life, he will never be open to the grace of God which has been promised to the **"humble"** in v.6

Submit is the principle of **Proverbs 3:5-6**
**"Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths."**

Hard for a *proud* person to submit. A proud life is hard to grace.

In **Luke 6:24-26**, Jesus warns us that when we are rich, well-fed, laughing, those who are spoken well of, are naturally weighted with the relentless gravity of pride and can find it difficult to humble yourself and submit in order to receive greater grace.

**"But woe to you who are rich,
For you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full,
For you shall hunger.
Woe to you who laugh now,
For you shall mourn and weep.
Woe to you when all men speak well of you,**

For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

Woodrow Wilson used the phrase can “*strut sitting down.*”

The 10 imperatives James uses are antidotes to pride.

A perfect prayer, “*Lord, what You will, where You will, and when You will.*”
Richard Baxter

Submit means to place under orders; place in rank. When we submit, we cease fighting and begin surrendering; our lives and our future.

If we *resist* God, instead of submitting to God, we may very well find ourselves submitting to the devil while resisting God. What a costly and tragic mistake that would be.

Remember, to submit is to arrange under, take your position under, subordinate yourself.

Most people’s problems exist from failure to submit to the Lordship of Christ.

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

To get the victory in the war with your soul you must first surrender.

W.W. Wiersbe, “*Unconditional surrender is the only way to complete victory.*”

2. RESIST. 7

“Resist the devil and he will flee from you” – stand opposed, speaks of drawing a line, an imperative which means we have a choice (resist devil or resist God).

1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

The devil is not submissive to God and seeks to prevent our submission to Him. Our resistance must be decisive and uncompromising.

As we humbly submit to God we are enabled to courageously stand against the enemy. When we submit ourselves unto God, that leaves the devil face-to-face with Him.

“Resist” – is a military metaphor which means to stand against, as in combat. In **Eph 6:12**, it speaks of **“wrestle”** or struggle.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

The struggle is supernatural; struggle (wrestle) suggests hand-to-hand combat.

This battle is:

- ◆ **Supernatural**
- ◆ **Personal**
- ◆ **Futile with conventional weapons**
(we need the armor of God)

1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Jesus said, **“If you are not for me, you are against me.”** Satan reverses

“he will flee from you” – indicates the promised victory is based on active resistance to the devil.

NOTE: He cannot hold a Christian against that Christian’s will. He cannot lead a believer into sin without the consent of that believer’s will.

Thomas a Kempis wrote, *“A good, devout person first arranges inwardly the things to be done outwardly... Who has a fiercer struggle than the person who strives to master himself and daily to grow stronger and advance for good.”*

E. DRAW NEAR.

Come near; restored fellowship; come close to God. Verb is used of priests approaching God with their sacrifices and man’s approach to God in worship and communion. James’ readers had drifted away from God. This passage carries the assurance that God will welcome them back.

“He will draw near to you”

- ◆ **We submit as servants**
- ◆ **We draw near as worshippers**

It is also important to understand that in the very act of calling us to draw near to Him, God has initiated our response. Through His grace, He has wooed us to Himself. John Calvin wrote, *“But if anyone concludes from this passage that the first part of the work belongs to us, and that afterwards the grace of God follows, the Apostle meant no such thing...but the very thing (the Spirit of God) bids us do, He Himself fulfills in us.”*

The Prodigal Son’s Experience

Luke 15:20, “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

Inch toward God, and He will step toward you. The essence of this passage is prayer. Prayer is the soul’s desire to come to Him, to receive His love, to feel His power and presence as we conform to His will.

Some refer to this passage as a “*nearer nearness.*”

In Ephesians 2:13, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” we are reminded that we came near in Christ. Now as believers, there are times that the Lord calls us to “*come near.*”

As we come near we can see clearer. Many are so far from Him they cannot see themselves.

ILL. Isa. 6

He went into the temple to mourn the death of a King (Uzziah), whose sin caused his death. Isaiah left the temple celebrating a nearness to God that led to this “death of self” in a prophet (himself).

- ◆ He saw the Lord for Who He Is
- ◆ He saw himself for who he was
- ◆ He saw others for who they are

Isaiah 6:1-8, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;

**The whole earth is full of His glory!"
And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and
the house was filled with smoke.
So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The LORD of hosts."
Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he
had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it,
and said:
"Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged."
Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
'Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?'
Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'"**

What a contrast to **Isaiah 1:16-18** – Isaiah responds to his message from the Lord.

**"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil,
Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Rebuke the oppressor;
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the widow.
"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the LORD,
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;**

**Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.”**

Once a person decides to submit, it is then time to commit. If you become aware that distance has grown between God and you, it is time for heart searching.

EXAMPLE OF KNOWING GOD MORE INTIMATELY.

Philippians 3:10, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

“know Him” – intimacy

“power of His resurrection” – same power that rose Jesus from the dead

“fellowship of His suffering” – note personal pronouns: Him, His, His. Same surrendering to the Father’s will Jesus rendered, led to His exaltation.

Philippians 2:5-11, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

**No Cross – No Crown
No Battle – No Victory**

B. CLEANSING. 8b

Repentance clearly defined

1. Outwardly