



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

LIVING DEPENDENTLY ON GOD- JAMES 4:15

COLORADO

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Dan File, P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO 82135-1088/303-345-8830 / filefamily@centurytel.net

James exposes presumption as sin first because we are not in control nor do we know the future. We can't even know what will happen tomorrow so planning without regard to God Who knows the future and is in control of the future is not only foolish, but it is sin because of the arrogant attitude of self-sufficiency in disregard to God. This ignores His providence and His sovereignty. To depend on ourselves instead of Him is crazy. James, secondly, teaches us that life is frail and brief. We are here today and gone tomorrow. Because life is so brief and frail and we don't know the future, we are foolish to ignore God's will! We must live in light of the truth that God is sovereignly in control and we are not. We must trust Him, seek His will, and make our plans wisely with regards to His desire, purpose and plan for our life. We must seek to serve Him, seek to please Him and plan... holding all things loosely for may His will be done and not mine!

LIVING DEPENDENTLY ON GOD- JAMES 4:15

James 4:13-15: "(13) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." (14) Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. (15) Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."

We are ignorant of the future and uncertain about life. In place of an arrogant self-sufficient attitude without regard to God, James shows where our heart and mind should be focused. Instead of living independently of God as most do, we must humbly abide dependently on the Lord and that's what James 4:15 instructs. James would insist that as we recognize that life is uncertain and transitory, such recognition, after all, is not even specifically religious. What these merchants need to go on to reckon with is that their lives are also in the hands of God.² And so must we.

I. HUMBLE DEPENDENCE ON GOD- JAMES 4:15

James 4:15: "Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."

Our frailty and ignorance should lead us to dependence on God. Have you been planning your own way, giving little thought to God's will for your life? Keep in mind that James is a book that shows what true faith is like. And in these verses we find that a true and genuine faith lives dependently on God knowing that even our very existence is granted by the mercy of God. True faith recognizes that all plans must be made in light of His will and we must acknowledge that all our intentions are subject to His will.

A. "INSTEAD YOU OUGHT TO SAY"- JAMES 4:15A

James 4:15a: "Instead, you ought to say..."

James 4:13 spoke to the presumptuous sin of, "you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go..." James connects verse 15 by emphasizing what we should say instead. Here in this verse we are given what our heart and mind must be centered around, "If the Lord wills." James urges all believers to submit to the Lord's will in all of life.

Keep in mind that James isn't suggesting that we should just speak the words, "If the Lord wills." We don't just add "Lord willing" at the end of our prayers. It is not merely a ritual of piety. No, it is so much more than that. Rather, this gives verbal testimony to our utter dependence on God alone regarding our plans and our future. Here we acknowledge the Supremacy of God with our words that manifest our heart. That is what James is saying. We certainly don't need any more Christian clichés! So don't say it if you don't mean it.

B. "IF THE LORD WILLS"- JAMES 4:15B

James 4:15b: "Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills..."

These four words, "If the Lord wills", express the attitude whereby we give recognition to God as sovereign and we decisively submit to Him in all our planning. It is with these words that the believer conveys the willingness to accept the Lord's will and dependence on Him. This communicates a biblical world view of history and its sovereign ruler.³ These words spoken from the heart reveal the true believers' willingness to submit life, plans and pursuits to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "God willing" is the posture of a burning heart.⁴ It must be the constant attitude and mindset of our heart as we conduct the affairs of life.

A common expression at that time was, "if the gods will". Not wanting to be confused with other gods or religions, James clearly identifies Who he is referring to by using the word "Lord". This word was a distinctive Jewish-Christian word that expresses God's ultimate sovereignty as Lord of all.

A true believer will be characterized by submitting to and doing God's will from the heart. Ephesians 6:6 says, "not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Each plan must be evaluated by God's standard and purpose for us. Every idea has to be filtered through God's will. And every action reflects what is genuinely in ones' heart. They must be sincere and authentic, not mere lip service as we do "the will of God from the heart."

To disregard God's will would be like saying that you are in charge of your life and this prideful, presumptuous attitude has already been addressed in the prior verses in James. But the mark of true faith is one submitted to God's will.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0107

Colorado

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Romans 12:2 reminds us that God's will is *"that which is good and acceptable and perfect."* In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gave us the pattern for praying *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) This phrase is used constantly throughout the New Testament emphasizing a submitted way of life to our Lord's will in all affairs of life: Acts 18:21, 1 Peter 3:17, 1 Corinthians 16:7, Hebrews 6:3, Philippians 2:24 .

How do you determine God's will for your life? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 gives us the unmistakable answer: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* Scripture reveals God's will for our lives!

C. SUBMISSION TO GOD'S DIVINE WILL- JAMES 4:15C

James 4:15: "Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."

The two verbs; *"we shall live"* and *"we shall do this or that"* are both future tense in the Greek and thus emphasize our dependence upon God for the future. Our lives are totally dependent on God's will. The continuance of life itself is determined by God's will. If our very existence for our life and breath is governed by God, how much more should formulating our plans and carrying them out be possible only if God wills it?

Just as all life is at the mercy of God, so all our activities are dependent on His will. We must acknowledge that all our intentions and our future dreams are in God's hands alone and are subject to God's will. We must recognize both our human finiteness and God's divine sovereignty. To have acquired the habit of submission and resignation to the Divine Will is all important for man.⁵ This must be a principle fixed in our mind that we live by. There is no magical significance about saying these words, rather we are called to live by them. It must be the perspective from which we view life. James exhorts us to evaluate our planning in accordance with the Lord's will as expressed in Scripture and live by those principles.

Jesus Himself modeled this same submission to God's will as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before going to the cross to pay for our sins. Matthew 26:42 records our Lord's words: *"My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done."* Paul conveyed this attitude as we see in Acts 21:14 when he went up to Jerusalem even though his life was in danger. Knowing it was the Lord's will for him to go, he went, trusting his uncertain future in the secure hands of God.

Yes we must plan wisely. After all, Scripture even commends the ant for gathering food in the summer for a supply in the winter. (Proverbs 30:25) But we must always remember that we are frail and ignorant of the future.

We recognize we are dependent on God for life, breath and all things. Therefore, we place our lives and work under God's will, holding our finite plans loosely, contingent on God's will and desiring that our aspirations only match His purpose.

I don't know about you, but I have had a few plans change in my lifetime. I thought I would be directing a Christian challenge camp for youth and families that I founded here in Colorado for the rest of my life. My wife and I loved what we were doing. But, unbeknownst to us, after 23 years of fruitful ministry, God had other plans and now I serve with Capitol Commission. Sure that was hard, but have I really submitted my life to fulfill God's purpose and plan, or... my purpose and plan? Do my aspirations match His purpose for me? Am I humbly willing to submit and resign my life to His Divine will? I hope so and commend the same to you.

*"The Scriptures give many marks of a true Christian, such as love for God, repentance from sin, humility, devotion to God's glory, prayer, love for others, separation from the world, growth, and obedience. But nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God."*⁶

*"Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning
And from ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"*

Isaiah 46:9-10

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.233.

²Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg. 204.

³Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg. 205.

⁴Hughes, R. Kent, *James: Faith That Works*. Good News Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1991. Pg. 206.

⁵Mayor, Joseph B., *The Epistle of St. James*. Zondervan's Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954. Pg. 229.

⁶MacArthur, John F., *James: Guidelines for a Happy Christian Life*. Word Publishing: Nashville, TN. 2001. Pg. 95.