

James 4:13-14, 16

“My Father’s world”

I. Intro

II. Vs. 13-14, 16a Ignoring God’s will

I. Intro

The remainder of the 4th chapter of James the writer deals with another aspect that will derail our spiritual growth and maturity in Christ, *failing to obey the will of God.*

Immediately it is apparent that James links this primarily too Christian businessman who clearly had the wrong attitude with regards to God’s will for them. A good portion of the problem was that this was an age of founding cities which produced economic opportunities for those people wishing to become citizens. In the case of Jewish business, it often had the carrot of Roman citizenship as part of the lure to get them to relocate. The founders of the city were well aware of the loyalty that accompanied Jewish business with Jewish patrons and as such that would make the relocation prosperous to all. And to the Jewish business owner they were looking at this from only what would benefit them financially without considering God’s will for their lives. Though that is clearly the context of the passage James has a much larger application point to make to all believers: **Knowing WHO holds the future is FAR BETTER than knowing WHAT the future holds.** God has given us great grace in not allowing us to know WHAT the future holds as the unveiling of tomorrow would causes us many moments of fear and dread at *what we didn’t want to face while causing to miss the countless blessing that each day held.* And if we knew a head of time our day and hour that our life would end we would die *thousands of times before we would really die and fail to live to our fullest.* Saints, attempting to live outside the will of God will cause us trouble instead of peace; **the**

safest most joy-filled existence any Christian can have is to be right where God wants you to be! We must never forget that **the will of God is never separated from the heart of God and as such, His will for us is an expression of His love towards us.**

To further grasp this section, we will be taking verses out of numerical sequence in order to better understand the passage. James points out that there are three possible attitudes to the “*Will of God*” and two of them are destructive too us and only one of them is where we should be.

- I. Vs. 13-14, 16 **Ignoring God’s will:** *“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”; 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.”* Vs. 16 *“But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”*
- II. Vs. 17 **Disobeying God’s will:** *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”*
- III. Vs. 15 **Obeying God’s will:** *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”*

James will show that such disregard to the will of God for our lives will cause us to fail in three areas:

- **Planning the future without God**
- **Presuming to know the future**
- **Postponing what should be done today**

II. Vs. 13-14, 16a Ignoring God’s will

Vs. 13-14,16 **Ignoring God’s will:** As mentioned the context is James addressing wealthy Christian Jewish merchants who clearly were discussing their business plans with no evidence that they had sought God’s will or prayed about their decisions. Instead they viewed their success in life by how many times they got “THEIR WAY” in what they planned. The phrase that starts this section is the words “Come now” and is a Greek

expression that means, “Now look here” and implies disapproval and urgency. James outlines their “*worldly wisdom business plan*” in *verse 13 that included a fivefold strategy to achieving its success* but disregarded four truths that could cause it to come to ruin. First the fivefold business plan according to worldly wisdom which on the surface seems quite logical and a good plan. In fact, I believe that this business plan would most likely be taught and encouraged by every major business school and small business administration as well as major corporation:

- A. **Flexibility** Vs. 13a “*Today or tomorrow..*”: The first thing we note in this worldly wisdom business plan is that it has flexibility as the plans could be implemented sooner or later.
- B. **Destination** Vs. 13b “*to such and such a city..*”: Although flexible in implementation it was specific in destination. No doubt the specific location was well thought out with specific reasons for it choosing that would give every possible advantage to achieving success.
- C. **Calculation**: Vs. 13c “*spend a year there..*”: The plan had thought out all the contingencies how long it would take for this or that, how long until it would be profitable.
- D. **Purpose**: Vs. 13d “*buy and sell*”: The Greek word used here is where we get our English word “emporium” which means a commercial center or a place for doing business. This plan was well thought out and included great detail and was not in any way haphazard.
- E. **Goal**: Vs. 13e “*make a profit*”: Finally, the plan showed that if implemented it would work and that all the above parts of the plan would achieve the ultimate

goal for these Christian businessmen and that was to make money. They had counted the cost, understood the risks, crunched the numbers and were willing to make the sacrifice but what they failed to take into consideration was that “making a profit” as a follower of Christ should never have been their primary goal! No, their ultimate goal in life should have been to glorify Christ, to make Him know and to further His kingdom. It’s not that their goal was bad it was just in the wrong place in their heart and it is clear that it was as 13 indicates the motive and power behind this fivefold plan is “**WE WILL**” and there is no indication that that consulted “**God’s will**”. And because their plan was motivated by “**their will**” and not “**God’s will**” it was completely oblivious to four facts that had they considered God’s will they may have avoided failure.

1. Vs. 13 **The complexity of life**: The very thing that made their fivefold plan so complete was also it’s weakness as it had to many moving parts that all had to come together at exactly the right time to achieve the desired outcome. Life is made up time that we cannot control, places that we are unfamiliar about, people we cannot count on all working in an environment that is beyond our manipulation. Apart from God life is a **riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma**. Ah, but when you come to Jesus you have come to ONE who is According to Col. 1:26-27 “is **the mystery which has been hidden from ages** and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which

is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**” Life starts to make sense the moment we start obeying and following His will for us and even our plans when submitted to Him have a new meaning and simplicity to where we can become confident in their eventual outcome because they are about His glory and not our success!

2. Vs. 14a **The uncertainty of life:** “Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.” Proverbs 27:1 reminds us “not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” Here was a business plan that was projecting out a year in advance but didn’t know what would happen tomorrow! Though they lacked no confidence in their future and believed that their plans put them in control; in reality they could not see one day ahead or change one outcome in their power. Oh, but when we submit our lives to God’s will as Isa 46:10 tells us that God, “Declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient *times things that are not yet done*”. Only when we are operating in the will of God can we be confident about tomorrow as we know He is leading us and not we ourselves.
3. Vs. 14b **The brevity of life:** “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*” This is not a question about the “**origin**” or “**essence**” of life but about the “**length of life**” which when compared to eternity is quantified as a vapor. There is a reason why the psalmist in Psalm 90:12 says, “*teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*” He did not say “teach us to number our

year”. One writer wrote a poem about the five stages of life saying: *When I was a child, I laughed and cried and **time crept**. When I became a youth, I dreamed and talked, and **time walked**. When I became a full-grown man, **time ran**. Now that I’m older I grew, and **time flew**. Soon I shall find in passing on that **time is gone!*** I’ve become far more aware of the brevity of life this year at the passing of Donna and this study caused me to number my wives’ days which were 21,398. I then decided that I wanted to know how much of her days were my days which were 15,558. What blessed and brought me to praise God was that He had given me 73% of her days to be my days and that we will have awaiting my going home 100% of time to be together. Apart from God’s will our plans fail to look at living at a moment of time each day and because of this we tend to “**waste time**” instead of “**invest time**”.

4. Vs. 16a **The frailty of man**: “*But now you boast in your arrogance.*” Man’s boasting and arrogance doesn’t cover up their weakness it exposes their weakness. Apart from obeying God’s will for our lives we cannot control the future as we neither possess the wisdom or power to control our future. James goes on to say that all such boasting is sin, as we are making ourselves God.

Saints we are forced to close our study this morning and when we get back to the book of James we will take up the other two options with regards to the will of God: **Disobeying God’s will** and **Obeying God’s will**.