

THE BOOK OF JAMES

“If the Lord Wills”

Scripture Reading: JAMES 4:13-18

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-8.** Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 9.** Today we continue in our expository study in the Book of JAMES. This is week #24. I have titled today’s message *“If the Lord Wills”* (4:15).
-) The more I read the Book of JAMES and the more I study what other pastors and theologians comment on this book, I am convinced that James is convinced that the words and actions of a person must reflect their professed Christianity.
-) I think there’s a good chance that James was there at the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said *“That not everyone who says to Me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”*
-) I think there’s a good chance that James was there when Jesus spoke the parable about the sower and the seed and the 4 soils when Jesus said that some seed falls on shallow soil and some seed falls among the thorns. Both of these seeds appear to be growing but eventually die when tested.
-) **SLIDE 10.** I said this in our second week in this study. This is the theme of this Book.
-) **SLIDE 11.** And every week in your bulletin I have this graphic which says that the Book of JAMES is the nuts and bolts of Christian living. Conclusion. Don’t say that you’ve *“accepted Christ”* at some point in your life and then act like the devil is still your daddy.
-) James presents us with yet another test of our Christianity in today’s text. And it’s concerning the will of God in our lives.

-) All of us in here are planners to some degree. We plan vacations. We plan on when we will do home improvements.
-) We plan financially for the future. We plan and set up doctor's appointments. We plan on where and when we will meet our friends for dinner on a Friday night. Our church plans a dinner and prayer meeting the last Wednesday of every month.
-) And the most important plan we can do is planning for our eternity. Embracing the gospel and having the assurance that our eternity is sealed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best plan we could ever have.
-) Planning is a smart thing to do. But James is warning us that in the midst of our planning, we must include the will of God. To some, this may seem like a trivial or unnecessary thing to do. But to James under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it was very important.
-) **SLIDE 12.** JAMES 1:1, the recipients of this letter. He is writing this to the 12 tribes (fellow Jews) dispersed abroad.
-) But I can't help thinking that he may have had certain people and situations in mind when he wrote this letter. And if what he writes pertains to some people in particular, then it certainly will apply to all his Jewish friends (and to us) too.
-) **SLIDE 13.** The next test? JAMES 4:13. In this passage, James is pointing out those in the business world who are making plans to conduct their business. Sounds OK to me. Again, we all plan for future events. It is a wise thing to do.
-) **SLIDE 14.** But James wants us to be aware of one issue in our planning that we must always consider. JAMES 4:14. Will we be here tomorrow? Let's talk about this.
-) People pass away every day. We all have had first-hand experience with that. Some of these people have lived long lives and pass away at a good old age.

-) But some people pass away unexpectedly. Car accidents. Victims of deadly crimes. Unfortunate medical conditions. Folks, we are never guaranteed tomorrow.
-) And as James writes, we are just like a vapor here today and then gone tomorrow.
-) In an article published on March 25, 2022 on the website www.visualcapitalist.com, here are some estimated stats about humanity that you may find rather interesting.
-) **SLIDE 15-18.** Stats. Using James' terminology, this means that approximately 109 billion people have just been a vapor. People are born, they live, and they die. And so will we. We are just a vapor too. And James wants us to understand this truth.
-) But why? What does James want us to understand about the fragility of our lives?
-) **SLIDE 19.** JAMES 4:15-16. I'm sure that all of us in here have made some very good decisions in our lives. Who have we thanked for those good decisions? Have we patted ourselves on the back? Or have we given the glory to God because we first consulted His wisdom and His direction for the decisions we needed to make?
-) Do we thank God or do we thank ourselves? Do we include the Lord in our plans? Do we pray to the Lord before making big decisions? It appears that the businessmen James is referring to here did not. They made plans as if God never existed. It's as if they are saying, "*We will run this company and we will go on this trip. We don't need to consult God first.*"
-) **SLIDE 20.** Jesus preaches a very similar parable in LUKE 12:16-21 and I wouldn't be surprised if James heard this too.
-) The rich man in this parable gave all the credit for his productive land to himself.

-) Now he will sit back, relax, eat, drink and be merry all while he pats himself on the back for a job well done.
-) But the rich man in this parable is just a vapor just like the rest of us. That night his soul will be required of him. Has he been rich towards God? There will come a time when our souls will be required of us too. Have we been rich towards God?
-) In this parable, we need to ask these questions. Who provided the seed? And who provided the soil? And who provided the rains? And who gave this man the strength and the ingenuity to manage his fields? And how was this man so fortunate to be the owner of such productive land?
-) **SLIDE 21.** JAMES 4:15. James says that seeking the Lord's will is the right thing to do.
-) **SLIDE 22.** JAMES 4:17. Then he goes on to say that if we don't seek the Lord's will in our decisions and if we don't give Him the glory for our accomplishments, it is a sin.
-) There are sins of commission and sins of omission. We are all familiar with sins of commission—stealing, adultery, coveting, gossip, telling lies, etc. These are things that we do.
-) But there are also sins of omission. The good we know we should do, but we don't do it. And James is telling us that this is one of those times where we commit one of those sins.
-) There is a saying that I learned after moving here to Virginia. People will be making plans for a certain future event and one of them will say, "*I'll be there only if the Lord's willing and the creek don't rise.*" I'm sure you've heard that line and probably even said that line before. And it comes directly from JAMES.
-) **SLIDE 23.** So, what are the four important lessons we are to learn from our text today? We are not **PROMISED** tomorrow. We are just a vapor passing through the passages of time. We will have a tomorrow only if the Lord wills.

-) **SLIDE 24.** We must **INCLUDE** the Lord in our decisions. Which decisions you may ask? Even the small ones? Which decisions do you want the Lord to be a part of? That's between you and God.
-) **SLIDE 25.** We must not be **ARROGANT** about our accomplishments. We must give God the glory for what we have and for what we can do.
-) **SLIDE 26.** DEUTERONOMY 8:18. The only reason you and I have any ability to do anything is because the Lord has given us that ability to do so.
-) **SLIDE 27.** Failure to seek and acknowledge the **WILL** of God in our lives is sinful. God has the best plan for our lives. Would we rather do it our way or would we rather do it His way?

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