

“LORD WILLING”
Part 9
James 4:13-17

(Available on Cassette Tape)

It is good to make resolutions for the New Year and to set goals, but it is presumptuous to leave God out of them. It is not wise to make plans as though God does not exist, because the future is in his hands whether we want to admit it or not. Plan ahead but hold your plans loosely. Put God’s desires at the center of your planning; he will never disappoint you.

James tells us not to boast and brag about what we will accomplish today or tomorrow. We are advised to pre-prepare for the future by saying (and meaning), “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

Biblical Teaching Made Relevant in Today’s World
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I. Practicing the Presence of God

To say, “Lord willing we will do this or that”, is to acknowledge the providence of God. It is a way of practicing the presence of God on a daily basis as the second King of Israel did. Although David sought after God, he struggled with sin on a daily basis. There is no disparity between the biblical records of David’s inward and outward journey. David sought a way to make Jehovah, the God we worship, the One on center stage. In his poems and in biographical accounts, we read David intentionally involved God in the details of his life, and our text for today challenges us to ask, “Do we?”

Practicing the presence of God is the daily responsibility of all who desire God’s blessings on their lives. C.S. Lewis has said, being a “practicing Christian means that every single act and feeling – whether pleasant or unpleasant, must refer to God.”

II. Letting God In

Compartmentalization our lives is what our secular, pluralistic society teaches us and nominal Christians practice. One way to intentionally keep God “in” our daily details is to remember the phrase, “Lord willing.”

Jesus taught his disciples to pray by saying, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When we pray, “your will be done”, we’re like a child who knows he can’t do what his father wants without his father’s help.

The petition, “your will be done”, in the original Greek language, means “point” action. When we pray, “your will be done”, we must be willing to do God’s will “right now.” When we say, “Lord willing”, or “your will be done”, both express dependence on our Heavenly Father. Both phrases acknowledge God’s providential plan for our lives.

Verse 16 in our text reveals God's pronouncement on all who would plan for the future – without including him. The sacred text says, “as it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.” The sin of pride leaves God out of the equation. Pride says, “I’ll do it on my own”, “It’s all about me.”

Verse 17 says, “Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” James is talking about the sin of omission – not doing what one knows he should do.

The footnote in the Life Application Bible on verse 17 says, in part, “We tend to think that doing wrong is sin. But James tells us that sin is also not doing right. It is a sin to lie; it can also be a sin to know the truth and not tell it. It is a sin to speak evil of someone; it is also a sin to avoid him or her when you know they need your friendship.”

SUMMARY AND APPLICATION FOR OUR LIVES

James presents us with the foolishness of ignoring the will of God in our daily planning: the complexity of life (verse 13); the uncertainty of life (verse 14a) and the frailty of human-kind (verse 16). Practicing the presence of God in our lives is more than saying, “Lord willing, I’ll do this or that”; it is a constant attitude of our heart that desires to know God more intimately and to do his will. Amen