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Don't Make Plans Without God

JAMES 4:13-17

Introduction

1. How many people in the world today choose not to make God a part of their daily lives?
2. How many of those who wear the name Christian seriously pray and seek God's will when it comes to their education, their vocation, who they will marry, will they will live and a host of other life choices?
3. I would like for each of us here tonight to ask ourselves, "Is God an important part of my daily life?"
4. In the letter which James wrote to the Jewish Christians who had been scattered abroad, we find him addressing these issues.
5. For them, it had not been easy when they first became Christians.
6. They had been "dispersed abroad" because of their belief.
7. In the early days of their newfound faith, they held on to Christ with everything they had.
8. However, as time passed and life began to settle down, the daily cares of living took center stage in their lives once more.
9. It wasn't long before they once again saw themselves as self-made, self-assured men, who though they were now Christians, lived as if the world were all there was.
10. They still prayed in their lives, but it was not to ask God where or what they should do, but to ask His blessings on their plans.
11. Tonight, I want us to stop for a moment and ask ourselves, "How do I make sure that God is the one directing my life?"

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I. What We Must Not Say

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."" (James 4:13, NASB95)

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A. OUR PRESUMPTUOUS CONFIDENCE

"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow . . ." (James 4:14a, NASB95)

1. When we make such plans, we are presuming to know what is going to happen in our lives when in reality we have no knowledge of what tomorrow may hold for us.
2. In 1785, a Scottish man named Robert Burns wrote a poem ("To A Mouse") in which he used the statement, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong (astray)."
3. Proverbs 27:1 cautions us with these words, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."
4. Job was, according to God, "the greatest of all the men of the east" and yet in less than 24 hours, he lost all of his wealth and his ten children (John 1:2-3, 13-19).
5. The foolish man in Jesus' parable who made his fortune with a bumper crop and planned his future did not know that his soul would be required of him that very night (Luke 12:20-21).
6. In truth, none of us know what tomorrow holds for us.
7. We cannot say with certainty that we are going to . . .
   a. Go here or there
   b. Do this or that

   . . . because we do not know what may happen in the meantime.

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B. OUR RADICAL FAULT

" You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." (James 4:14, NASB95)

1. How many of us have seen a morning fog which is suddenly gone when the sun has risen in the sky.
2. How many of us have watched steam rising from a pan on the stove or a warm cup of coffee in our hand suddenly dissipate into the air.
3. Like the vapor the vapor that appears and then vanishes away, we are frail human creature who cannot guarantee our own existence beyond this very moment.

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4. Time and again, through His Holy Spirit, God's speaks to the brevity of our lives in Old Testament Scripture:

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to an end without hope." (**Job 7:6, NASB95**)

"Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good." (**Job 9:25, NASB95**)

"My days are like a lengthened shadow, and I wither away like grass." (**Psalm 102:11, NASB95**)

"As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes." (**Psalm 103:15, NASB95**)

5. It is not my desire to be morbid tonight, but the only thing we know is certain about our lives is that they will end in death, unless the Lord returns before then.
6. It was Moses who in Psalm 90:12 asked of God, "teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom."

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II. What We Ought To Say

"Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that" (James 4:15, NASB95)

A. "IF THE LORD WILLS"

1. I imagine there are many of us who have heard young adults declare their plans for the future . . .
   a. Where they will go to school, how long it will take, the degree they will obtain.
   b. Where they plan to live and work.
   c. When they will marry, the size of family they will have.
   d. The home they will acquire, the financial wealth they will accumulate, etc.
2. Many of these plans are made without any true dependence upon God.
3. If you are a young person here tonight, ask some of our adults about the surprises they encountered in their lives.
4. I can tell you that one of my wife's friends told her that she would marry me after Becky described her first impressions of me — Becky told her friend there was no way that was going to happen.
5. God had different plans!
6. James tells us that we should always condition our plans upon the Lord's will.

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   a. At the end of his second missionary journey, Paul promised the Ephesians, "I will return to you again if God wills" (Acts 18:21).
   b. In his first letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote, "I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills" (1 Corinthians 4:19).
   c. At the end of that same letter, he told them, "I hope to remain with you

for some time, if the Lord permits" (1 Corinthians 16:7).

d. He told the Philippians that "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly" (Philippians 2:19).

e. Five verses later he told them "I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly" (Philippians 2:24).

7. There were other times when Paul spoke confidently of his future plans without using the phrase (cf. Acts 19:21; Romans 15:28; 1 Corinthians 16:5).

a. "Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."" (Acts 19:21)

b. In Romans 15:28, he told the Christians in Rome that once he had delivered the contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, "I will go on my way of you to Spain."

c. In 1 Corinthians 16:5, "I will come to you after I go through Macedonia."

❏ Even in these times, Paul knew that his plans were always dependent upon God's will.

8. More important than saying the right words is recognizing our dependence upon God.

9. When it comes to . . .

a. Our plans as students

b. Our choice of a future spouse

c. Our future education and vocation

d. All of our everyday activities

. . . we must always understand these things will happen only "if God wills."

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B. TO ARROGANTLY BOAST OF WHAT WE WILL DO IS EVIL

"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil." (James 4:16, NASB95)

1. There were those in the church in James' day who bragged about their plans and how wealthy they would become.
2. It is if someone were to say today, "look what I have done" without giving God credit.
3. Most of us would never speak such words openly, but, would we dare to think them in our heart.
4. According to Scripture, Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the Babylonian kings dared to think this way.
5. One day as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, observing the grandeur of the city he said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).
6. God sent swift judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar and he fell to all fours.
7. For seven years, he ate grass as an ox until he finally came to his senses.
8. If God did this to a pagan king, do you think He will allow one of us who are His own children to continue in such arrogance?

Conclusion

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"Therefore, to one who knows the right [good] thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17, NASB95)

1. What is the "right" or "good thing" of which James speaks?
2. The "right thing" is to reject Satan's delusion that God is irrelevant in our lives.
3. Instead, we must embrace the truth that our lives are short and we have no control over their brief span.
4. The "good thing" is to say with all our heart, "If the Lord wills, I will live and do

this or that."

5. Remember what James said, "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." (v. 14).
6. Ultimately, we long for eternity with God.
7. The burning question which each of us must ask ourselves is this: "Do I belong to Him and am I living with eternity in my heart?"
8. If not, tonight is a good time to come to Him.