

James 4:13-5:11 Inside Knowledge Outside Trusting



Napoleon Bonaparte was a military genius, but his pride led to his downfall. He was about to invade Russia, but a friend tried to dissuade him. When Napoleon would not be budged, the friend shared the familiar proverb, “Man proposes, God disposes.” Napoleon angrily snapped back, “I dispose as well as propose.” This is foolish.

We may not be as bold as Napoleon in saying this but we can fall into thinking and acting like we are in control of our lives. We can fall into the trap because we succeeded and have money that we have succeeded because of our own hard work. James says this is wrong thinking and wrong action.

We continue with the theme **Inside Out – living on the outside what you know on the inside**

Let’s see how this continues in this section of James.

1. God is in control

Read: 13-14

We arrogantly plan as if we are in control when we are not. There is a lot of talk about we will do but no mention of God. Our lives are a mist. Our lives are like vapour. Here one second gone the next. We are here today and gone tomorrow. We think because we are here now we’ll be here in 70 years time or even 80 or even 100.

I have two young relatives who have died young to remind me that there is no guarantee that we live long. One died when he was eighteen months old in an accident and the other was murdered at twenty one.

George Bernard Shaw observed, “The statistics on death are quite impressive. One out of one people die.”

Read: 15-16

God is in control. It is not wrong to plan but we plan humble. James has been giving us commands to take actions. He wants us to act and to plan to act. But we are to do that with an attitude that God exists and more than that he is in control and we are not. We are to plan realising what we plan may not happen.

He is not saying as long as you the line ‘If it the Lord’s will’ like some kind of magic spell but have the right attitude that is reflected in how you speak about your plans. Not saying if it’s God’s will after you’ve planned although that is good but also as you are planning thinking about if it is God’s will.

How do you do that? Look at the Bible.

Read: 17

We don’t even do what we meant to do so we shouldn’t be in such a hurry to plan what we don’t even know we can do. James is saying if you don’t plan in God’s will you are sinning. We must do nothing without relating to God.

This week I had some bad news about my health. I have Rheumatoid Arthritis and the specialist has been telling me that because we caught the disease early and I am medication that has shut down the symptoms that future is good. This week he told me that one of my fingers is deformed even though he said that wouldn’t happen. Also my liver tests are showing signs of being intolerant to the medication that is keeping the symptoms under control. That was a major blow for me. But how foolish of me to entrust myself to the specialist. Yes he may

know more about my health than I do but he is no more control of my body than I am. It is God who is in control of my body and so I should entrust myself to him.

It is possible for a Christian to fall into practical atheism, we say we believe in God but we act as though we don't. And what has James been saying through the whole book? Belief must be seen in actions. We not only leave God out of our planning but we brag about it.

What have you planned lately? Do you consider whether it was God's will for you? Did you examine the Bible as you planned? Did you submit the plans to God in prayer? Did you take time out to pray about it?

What action have you taken lately? egs. Did you consider whether it was God's will? Did you take time out to pray?

God is in control and we are not so we submit all of our lives to him.

2. Comfort and warning

Read: 1-3

James speaking to the oppressed poor. Those in the room in front of him are the oppressed poor.

He wants to comfort them. Your prayers have been heard. Prayers of help. Prayers for Justice. Lord when will this stop. They have been heard and there will justice. There will be relief. When God's judgement comes. When these oppressors will be brought to justice not in this life but in the next.

He is speaking to them by addressing those who are oppressing them.

Take comfort those who are oppressing will be brought to justice.

What does he say to the rich oppressors?

You have hoarded wealth. vv.2-3

v.4 You have ripped off your workers.

v.5 you have lived in luxury and self indulgence.

They are living for wealth as if it lasts forever and it doesn't.

Crops rot. Clothes gets eaten. Jewellery corrodes.

This is the danger of wealth.

The rich are acting like this in the last days when God's judgment is coming any minute. They are like cattle being fattened for the slaughter.

This should warn us not to fall into the sin money can bring.

See 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

Money is like a loaded gun. or like fire. both can be helpful but in the wrong hands can do huge damage.

Stuff is a burden. Our riches our wealth is a curse.

Jesus said It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God Matt 19:23. We think and live like we don't believe him. We act as if we can prove Jesus wrong. Or that he is talking about everyone else except us.

A businessman once had an angel visit him, promising to grant one request. The man asked for a copy of the stock market page one year in the future. As he was studying the numbers on the future exchange and gloating over how much he would make because of his knowledge of the future, his eye glanced across the page. His picture was in the obituary column. Suddenly his new wealth faded into insignificance in light of his own death. Instead focusing on God and trusting in him we often focus on money our put our trust in it.

The goal of life for many of us is to have more money and not to give but to live. Not to increase our giving but to increase our standard of living. Even if it may not consciously be our goal just watch what you do with your money when you get more. It will be spent on a better car, better house, better holiday, better computer. The more stuff we have the more it controls us. We have to insure so we spend more because of our indulgence. It is an increasing cycle.

Friends let's not kids ourselves most of us are in the group of people James is talking about who are the rich.

We may not be oppressing workers we are directly employing but we maybe robbing those in need who we are meant to give to. We are living in luxury and self indulgence.

And if you just thought I am not talking about it is likely that I am. We have running water in our house. Multiple taps in multiple rooms. How many of us live in houses that have bedrooms that we don't use? Are you worried about what you'll eat for lunch? Did you go to bed last night not being able to sleep because you didn't know where the next meal for your children would come from? NO.

The cure for hoarding and self indulgence is giving. There is a family at Lakeshore who now sponsors 8 children Belinda's first thought we she got her new job was to think of how she could help a friend in need.

The cure for hoarding and self indulgence is giving. Determine to give 1 thing away each week. A friend of mine is trying to give 5 things away a week. Will there be someone who take on our ministry to help us as a church and as individuals to help those in need? Locally and globally. Those in our church and those outside our church. A mercy ministry. We are doing it in a fragmented way but we need to become more focused and more organised.

Be comforted but be warned. Examine yourself prayerfully to see if you have fallen into the trap James is condemning.

James has been condemning the arrogance in ignoring God in your life and the arrogance that wealth brings. He now turns to the attitude those who have new birth through the word of truth should have. He says:-

3. Be patient

Read: 7, 8, 10.

Not only patience but closely related perseverance. v.11

PATIENCE is elf restraint when you want something or when something bad is happening to you. Douglas Moo in his commentary says:- *Resignation in the face of suffering along with confident expectation of a day when the fortunes of this life will be reversed.*

How can you be patient? By remembering the Lord's coming. In view of the return of Jesus.

See v.7, 8, 9

Stand firm. Take your position. Keep your position of living for Jesus even in opposition. Why? Comfort is on the way. The King Jesus is coming to right the wrong.

It is near. v.8. The Judge is at the door. v.9

Be like a farmer. Who prepares the soil. Who ploughs the soil. Who sows. Who waits for the rain. Who waits to reap his crop.

Be like the prophets of the OT who spoke and were opposed but continued to speak for God.

Be like Job James says. The model of endurance and vindication.

The Christian life is matter of doing the same things over and over again. Daily attention to our relationship with God. Facing each struggle one at a time. Persevering in the face of opposition.

Live like Jesus is coming at the end of the week. No live like Jesus is coming at the end of the day or even at the end of the hour or this minute. What would change if you knew Jesus could turn up any minute? Because he could.

Are you living in anticipation of the return of Jesus? Are you cultivating the anticipation of the return of Jesus? Do this patiently in the face of trials.

The content of your prayers reflects what you believe. As you listen in on the prayer of Jesus in the garden before His death you hear him submitting to the will of the Father. If we listened in on your prayers would we hear you submitting your life to the will of the Father?

God is in control so we should submit our lives to His will. We should take comfort in the coming of Jesus or warning if necessary and be patient as we wait for His return.