

“LIVING OUR LIFE TO THE GLORY OF GOD”

James 4:13-17

Nov 7, 2010

INTRODUCTION: In 1875 William Ernest Hensley wrote a poem entitled, “*Invictus*” which in Latin means “*invincible*.” On June 11, 2001, Timothy McVeigh was executed for his role in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 infants, children, and adults. The 33 year old McVeigh declined to make a final statement before his execution. Instead, he asked that a hand-printed copy of his poem be distributed to the media witnesses. McVeigh adapted the poem to his own situation as a defiant and unrepentant killer. After being pronounced dead, one of the reporters read the poem:

“INVISIBLE” (INVICTUS)

“Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Loom but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, my unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.”

Jack A. Andrews

As believers, we certainly would never say or admit to be such as McVeigh. However, James addresses attitudes, actions, and sayings that speak of “independence from God,” “indifference toward God,” “ignoring God,” etc. (disregard of God)

The sin of failing to come to God in prayer is one of the most common offences a Christian commits. It leads to a presumptuous confidence in the future.

James charges his people with failing to involve the Lord in their plans, God is omitted from their plans; He is not part of the formula.

The Lord is not in the “mix.” There is a common sin dealt with here in this passage. It is that of **practical atheism** – planning without taking God into account. I wish to make my plea early on, **GUILTY AS CHARGED!**

One major truth came to my mind in my research, **“My Future is in God’s Hands.”**

I. PRESUMING ON HIS HANDS. 13-14

A. OUR PLANS. 13

“Come near” – now look here; just a moment, usually implies disapproval and conveys a sense of urgency. This passage views ourselves as the final authority over our lives and then living as if this were true.

They had planned their business future and had omitted God from their plans. While these merchants are to be blamed for leaving God out of their plans, they are not faulted for planning. We are to allow space for Him to step in and interrupt or alter the plan.

PROBLEM: Woven into our heart’s fabric is the desire to have full charge.

David Jeremiah said of v.13:

1. **The Plan was Constructed**
“today or tomorrow”
2. **The Place is Chosen**
“we will go to such and such a city”
3. **The Period is Calculated**
“spend a year there”
4. **The Purpose is Considered**
“buy and sell”
5. **The Profit is Computed**
“and made a profit”

“So pervasive is our culture’s arrogant independence of God that even many (most?) Christians attend church, marry, choose their vocations, have children, buy and sell homes, expand their portfolio, and numbly ride the currents of culture without substantial reference to the will of God.”

Kent Hughes

B. OUR PRESUMPTION. 14

Proverbs 27:1

“What is your life?” – not a question about the origin or essence of life. James’ answer is talking about the time between birth and death (dash).

Job 8:9, “For we were born yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow.”

Job 9:25-26, “Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They pass by like swift ships, like an eagle swooping on its prey.”

Job 14:1-2, “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue.”

**Psalms 39:4-5, “Lord, make me to know my end,
And what is the measure of my days,
That I may know how frail I am.
Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths,
And my age is as nothing before You;
Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.
Selah**

**Psalms 103:15-16, “As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.”**

1. Uncertainty and Complexity of Life
“You do not know what will happen tomorrow”

2. Brevity of Life
“For what is your life?”

**Psalms 90:12, “So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”**

Life slips through our fingers:

*When as a child, I laughed and wept – **Time Crept***

When as a youth, I dreamed and talked – Time Walked
When I became a full-grown man – Time Ran
When older still I grew – Time Flew
Soon I shall find is passing on – Time Gone

We are talking about presuming on God, planning without God.

Luke 12:13-21, “Then one from the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’”

II. PRESENT ATTITUDE CONCERNING HIS HANDS

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Problem is PRIDE; points back to **James 4:6, 10**. We think ourselves to be the master of our own fate. An attitude that nothing can happen outside of our control.

J.B. on verse 16, “As it is, you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence. That sort of pride is all wrong.”

“boast” – used twice in N.T., here and **I John 2:16**,
“boastful pride of life”; causes independence and self-sufficiency;
causes us to stop short of conscious dependence on God.

Boast is plural, can refer to **all** kinds of bragging.

“all such boasting is evil” – Sure, God gave me life, but it is my brains, my plans, my energy; amazing arrogance.

The Lord helped Uzziah until he became strong

ILLUSTRATE: Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:28-33, “All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?’

While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.’ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.”

III. PRINCIPLES CONCERNING HIS HANDS. 15, 17

A. BELIEVER’S REASONABLENESS. 15

Deo Volente = D.V. A postscript used over 100 years ago between Christians, means “*if the Lord wills or God willing.*”

Acts 18:21, “but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.”

1 Corinthians 4:19, “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.”

1 Corinthians 16:7, “For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.”

Leads us to believe that the Lord has a unique purpose and a special plan for each of us.

Jimmy Draper, “*We are to live in an awareness that our lives are under His inspection.*”

Wiersbe, “*God does not reveal His will to the curious or the careless, but to those who are ready and willing to obey Him.*”

“If God wills” – this is a heart attitude; it recognizes the sovereignty of God in governing our lives; it is acknowledging our total dependence on God; just the opposite of presumption!

1. We Can Defy God’s Will

Living as if God did not exist

2. We Can Deny God’s Will

Knowing but arrogantly rejecting His will

3. We Can Disobey God's Will

Know God's will, affirm it, then proceed to disobey it

4. We Can Delight in God's Will

B. BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY. 17

Those who know God's will are responsible to obey it, and if they fail to do so, they sin. The sin of disregarding and disobeying God's will is one of omission; of not doing what we know is right

Luke 12:47-48, "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

Without a doubt, this is a most difficult form of sin with which to deal. God has given us so much and we often do so little with it. We miss the mark repeatedly because we fail to do what the Lord is calling us to do. Here, sin is defined negatively. Not only is it sinful to do and say things that are wrong, but it is equally sinful to refuse to do what is right.

You may not be chargeable for what God has forbidden, but you might be guilty of neglecting what He has commanded.

John 13:17, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

"Therefore" in v.17 indicates the sin exposed is known. The readers are well aware they were leaving God out of their lives and plans. A.T. Robertson calls this verse a summary of the entire epistle.

"Know" is a strong verb meaning to be acquainted with and responsible for.

He does not do the good he knows to do; failure to act; knowledge but absence of works.

Knowing what is good, and the ability to do it, creates an obligation to do it.