



Lesson 11 May 13, 2010

Presumption or Submission

James will now close chapter four by identifying and discussing three attitudes man has toward the will of God, of which only submission is proper for a mature believer. The contrasting attitudes of ignorance and disobedience frame a logical progression of his earlier commentary in the chapter on being at war with God. When a believer lives outside of God's will, as a friend of the world, there can only be envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work (James 3;16), and no peace within or without.

1. In verses 13, 14, and 16, James rebukes those who willfully discount the complexities of everyday life and who overconfidently plan their future business transactions (v13) as boastful and arrogant and whose presumptuous rejoicing is evil (v16), for no one knows the future *and* life is as uncertain and brief as a vapor that quickly vanishes (v14). How do these passages provide support for James' theme?

Psalms 31:15; 75:6-7; 103:14

Luke 12:18-20

1 Corinthians 1:29; 5:6

2 Peter 2:10



Lesson 11 May 13, 2010

2. In verse 15, James emphasizes that the proper attitude *should be* in seeking the Lord's will through prayer and Bible study and then planning accordingly, which sometimes requires determining what His will may be through the actual experience of "doing" what we know to be true in practical responsibility to the Word. Note that we should prudently plan for the future but should do so in an attitude of humility. What further insight do these scriptures add to James' thoughts?

Psalms 1:2-3; 31:15; 143:10

Proverbs 3:5-7

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 5:10, 17; 6:6

Colossians 1:9

3. In verse 17, James rebukes those who commit sin by not doing good even when they know to do so, in effect directly disobeying or ignoring God's will through pride or ignorance. How do these verses relate to James's points?

Hosea 4:6

Proverbs 16:18; 29:23



Lesson 11 May 13, 2010

Luke 12:47

1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

2 Peter 2:21

Personal Application

Throughout the last of chapter three and all of chapter four, James vigorously denounces the pride and envy, as well as the inevitable ignorance and folly of man's wisdom in seeking the things of this world, which in turn only generates further conflict, confusion, and evil. Note "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). James condemns both the proud and the ignorant who either arrogantly disregard the fact that one cannot know the future or who indifferently use it as an excuse to do nothing – "wherefore lay apart all filthiness and naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls. Be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:21-22). The complacency, pride, and inactivity of self deception is one of our greatest vulnerabilities.

Ignorance and pride are each rooted deep in the old nature, the flesh with its insatiable desire to please self and to exalt self. To illustrate these points, James uses the example of the ignorance of those who please themselves through self indulgence or laziness and therefore detest the effort of diligent Bible study and prayer in seeking God's will and who must accept its sad consequence – "therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge" (Isaiah 5:13). James then condemns the proud who simply refuse to obey God, thinking themselves to be god "who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Interestingly, the arrogant, powerful, and boastful who seek their own exaltation succumb to the same fate as the ignorant – "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22), and "he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof come envy, strife, railings, evil speech, and perverse disputes" (1 Timothy 6:4).

By contrast, a mature Christian walk demands active planning based upon common sense, Divine wisdom from above, and prudence, for "the prudent foresees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3); however, such planning must be made in



Lesson 11 May 13, 2010

conjunction with an active dependence on seeking and knowing God's will for the significant and the trivial. Fortunately, James does provide instructive, practical hope for those who will commit themselves to His will, for we "should earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). As we embrace James' three fold command (remember the three fold cord of Ecclesiastes 4:12 "is not quickly broken") to submit to God, to draw near to God, and to humble ourselves in His sight, and as we further apply, as a "doer," ourselves to obeying His will as clearly outlined in Scripture, we develop an intimate, growing, maturing relationship with our Father as He reveals more and more of Himself and His will to each one of us individually. Let us therefore shun the attitude of the "presumptuous, self willed who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" (2 Peter 2:10), and instead embody an obedient and loving submission to our ever gracious, merciful, and compassionate Lord.