

Personal Plans & Providence (lesson #9)

James 4:13-17

What are your plans & goals for the future? ...

- 1) A college degree or some other form of secular education
- 2) To be married & start a family
- 3) To travel to someplace new

Or is your main goal? ...

- 1) Salvation yours & someone you know
- 2) Spiritual growth
- 3) Leading your family to heaven

Too many place an emphasis in all the wrong places when planning for the future.

We are prone to be earth-bound rather than heaven-centered in our thinking, & thus we leave the Lord completely out of our plans.

James rebukes the arrogance & self-sufficiency that characterizes many people in the world, & which characterizes far too many Christians.

We see from our text that our Lord must not be excluded from our thinking (plans); **we** must learn to give primary emphasis to His will for our lives & place our hope & trust in His divine providence.

Providence: The Lord's control & supervision of all the events of our world so as to bring the highest good to His purpose & His people. **The** idea of being providentially hindered is sometime used as an excuse to charge God with our foolish choices (The ox in the ditch is not an example of being "*providentially hindered*", but an example of "*providential instruction*" under that condition).

This is not to say that the Lord causes everything to happen. **He** does not! **Many** people do things that are contrary to His expressed will—even His children err in this regard.

But the Bible teaching of providence presupposes the ability of the Lord to take whatever does happen & use the event to the ultimate accomplishment of His holy purposes.

Discuss: **Joseph**, **Rom 8:28**; **Psa 3:5**; **55:22**; **Lk 12:22-31**.

Perhaps our emphasis that the Bible teaches that miracles were confined to the early years of the church & the personal ministry of the Lord has left some with the impression that God is inactive in the world of our time.

However, providence is not miraculous in nature. It is the non-miraculous, indirect intervention of God in human affairs that is sufficient to accomplish His divine will in human affairs.

It is difficult for many to believe in God's providence in view of the presence of tragedy & evil in the world—thinking He should be willing to prevent it.

Yet we must still believe in the all-powerful & loving God who is still in control of all things; **we** must believe that He overrules all things for the good of His people & His purposes.

Song: "God Holds The Future In His Hands"

Actually, God's providence is more impressive—in some ways—than even the exhibition of His miraculous power.

- 1) **Miracle**: instantaneous manifestation of God's supernatural power over the material world & universe.
- 2) **Providence**: non-miraculous proof of His authority & power over all things, including the day-to-day affairs of life; **He** is able to make preparation for our lives & for the fulfillment of His will many years in advance.

1. What do some Christians overlook when they make their plans?

The will of the Lord: the providence of God & how it may affect their personal plans.

a. How can we avoid such an oversight?

Consider Paul (1 Cor 4:19; 16:7) -- & then learning to live with the outcome, avoiding the sins mentioned in our previous study (Jas 4:1-4).

2. Do the words “if the Lord wills ...” have to be uttered when we make plans?

Remember the power of the tongue to direct the course of the whole body (Jas 3:3-4).

a. How might the statement “if the Lord wills” be misused?

It may become a “vain repetition” of a phrase that holds little meaning, especially if we do not pray & or consult the Will of God first.

3. What is wrong with the planning of verse 13?

The Lord’s activity is not considered & thus not figured into the human plan as possibly overruling it.

Practical Atheism: does not deny the existence of God, but refuses to consider His Will.

Can we make distant plans? *Yes, but God controls our future for the good or evil we may do.*

4. Of what do we become guilty when we fail to consider the Lord in our plans?

Arrogant boasting, which is evil.

Such action falls under the heading of “the pride of life”, which is here described as planning to do a thing with no thought of what the Lord may desire; thus stealing glory from Him (Dan 4:28-33; Lk 12:16-21).

Evil or Oversight? Do we really intend to leave the Lord out of our plans when we refuse to say, “if the Lord will” or does it indicate a lack of faith?

5. In the context of verse 17, what “good” *must* we do?

Recognize our dependence upon the Lord by verbally professing that dependence.

a. Can this verse be applied to any “good” we know to do yet fail to do?

Yes.

We refer to it as a sin of omission: deliberately refusing or failing to do something that is within our capability of doing in the normal course of living.

6. Failing to do what we know to do & are capable of doing is often referred to as sins of _ _ _ _ _.

See above:

We will be judged by our Lord not only on the basis of actions taken—good or evil—but also by the good we fail to do.

Cases of sins of omission:

- 1) Spiritual Shepherds or Elders – (Ezek 34:1-4)
- 2) The People Of Israel – (Ezek 33:30-33)
- 3) Ezekiel Himself – (Ezek 33:7-10)
- 4) The Unforgiving Servant (he omitted compassion) – (Matt 18:32-33).