

Planning the Future

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: James 4:13-17

This lesson is the eighth in a series on the book of James. In this passage, James discussed what we need to remember as we make plans for our lives.

Planning Is a Part of Life (v. 13-15)

- James began this section by talking about making plans (v. 13) – planning is a necessary part of life (Proverbs 16:9; 19:21); it is wise to make plans (Proverbs 20:5), then be diligent to carry out those plans (Proverbs 21:5)
- However, life is uncertain (v. 14) – we don't know what will happen or when (Ecclesiastes 8:7); this uncertainty is not a license to worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34), but uncertainty is a reality
- As we make plans, we must remember God – “If the Lord wills...” (v. 15); this is also a reminder of the need to follow God's will (Proverbs 16:9; 19:21); we must follow God's ways and allow Him to direct our steps because His counsel will stand

Life Is Short (v. 14)

- Life is uncertain (cf. Ecclesiastes 8:7), despite our best efforts to plan for the future – yet death is certain (Hebrews 9:27); even if this is not a pleasant thought, it is a reality (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:2)
- We are here on this earth for a short period of time (Psalm 90:10, 12) – it may seem long to the young, but we realize the brevity of life more as we age (cf. Genesis 47:9)
- Not only will death come, it will come suddenly and unexpectedly (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:6-7) – this is not something we plan for; we know it is coming, but we don't know when

We Are Not to Boast (v. 16)

- It is arrogant to assume we have more control over our lives than we do (cf. Luke 12:18-20) – there are many things that are simply beyond our control
- Yet by boasting like this, we essentially put ourselves in the place of God (cf. Ezekiel 28:2, 6-9) – this is evil
- Besides being evil, it is foolish (Luke 12:20) – God ridicules those who make wicked plans (Psalm 2:1-6; 37:12-13)

We Must Do What Is Right (v. 17)

- God has revealed His will in His word – He expects us to know it (James 1:19, 21) and do it (James 1:22)

- We sin when we fail to do what the Lord has instructed us to do (Romans 3:23)
- We must not make excuses for our failure to do what is right – sometimes “planning” is a form of procrastination as we plan to do right, but later (Luke 12:19; Acts 24:25); time being “short” does not justify us neglecting what is good (Ephesians 5:16); rather than making excuses, we simply need to do what the Lord wants us to do

Conclusion

- Planning for the future is a necessary part of life – yet we must do this according to God’s will
- Remember what the Lord expects us to do – do not fail to carry out His will
- Remember that life is short – let us not allow the affairs of life to interfere with what is truly important