



Sunday, July 18, 2021

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Intro to James 4:13-17

It seems we live much of our lives happily ensconced in the myth of control. The way we make our plans, the way we get angry when our plans are thwarted, the way we puff ourselves up when our plans succeed, all these things point to the fact that we not only live as though we are in control of our lives, but that we deeply enjoy the thought of being in control.

The Bible presents a stark contrast to this myth. In the Bible, we are not the captains of our own fate. Rather, it is God who made the heavens and the earth. He formed us from the dust of the earth. He is the One who is sovereign over the events of our lives and ultimately is behind all that happens—either decreeing or allowing it to happen.

Yet this God is not a volatile, quick-tempered Being. Instead, He is a gracious and merciful being. He says He is working all things together for good for those who love Him. So, while it may not appear (to our puny wisdom) that God knows what He is doing, and it may appear that we would know better, nevertheless, God knows exactly what He is doing, and He is entirely able to do all that He wills (Ps. 115:3).

Context

In the Old Testament, there is a genre known as “wisdom literature.” We think of this primarily as Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Many scholars today consider James to be the “wisdom literature” of the New Testament. Passages like this one make a pretty compelling case for that view. Its rhetorical questions beckon the reader to reflect on the meaning of life and what God has actually called us to. It answers the question: what is the good life? In sum: the good life is humbly acknowledging the Lord’s sovereign prerogative in my life to do as He sees fit, and trusting that He knows what’s best and will do it.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read James 4:13-17

“If the Lord Wills”

- Presumptuous planning (4:13-14a)
- Transitory life (4:14b-c)
- Life under the Sovereign (4:15)
- The evil of arrogance (4:16-17)

5 Diagnostic Questions

- 1) What evidence is there that you live as though God is in control? Or does the evidence show that you live as though you are in control?
- 2) Do you get frustrated when things don't go your way?
- 3) Do you get disappointed when you don't get the credit you think you deserve?
- 4) Do you tell the difference between poor planning and simply when God has other plans in store?
- 5) When you work hard, do you get anxious about efficiency or productivity?

3 Applications

How do we develop an “if the Lord wills” mindset?

- 1) Verbally put your plans under His will and authority.
- 2) When things don't go your way, ask for wisdom (1:5)
- 3) When things get painful, never forget it is the Lord who wills and that He is working all things together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28)

