

How Do You Respond To The Will of God?

James 4:13-17

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Peter LaRuffa / May 17, 2020

I. Make your plans, but never without acknowledging God's will over it all!

James 4:13 "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'"

A. **You're far too impotent** to make your plan come together on your own.

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Psalm 85:12 "Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase."

1 Cor. 4:7 "For who sees anything different in you? **What do you have that you did not receive?** If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"

B. **You're far too ignorant** to plan for anything beyond right here & now.

James 4:14 - "...yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."

II. Set your goals, but beware of the evil (yes, evil) idea of reaching them on your own, apart from God!

James 4:16 "As it is, you boast in your arrogance. **All such boasting is evil.**"

The people in James 4:13 chose their own **time** ("today or tomorrow"), **location** ("such and such a town"), **duration** ("spend a year there"), **business venture** ("trade"), and the **result** ("make a profit"). None of these are evil in and of themselves. However, having no contingencies in place, they believed with certainty they could do this *on their own*, making no mention of God at all!

The word translated as "evil" in James 4:16 is elsewhere used as a title for the original godless boaster himself; Satan.

Isaiah 14:13, 14 "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"

III. Work your plan, acknowledging it's entirely dependent upon God's will - before, during and after it all!

James 4:15 "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"

A. Christians plan, **but the will of God is central to it all.**

Acts 18:21 "But on taking leave of them he said, 'I will return to you **if God wills,**' and he set sail from Ephesus."

1 Cor. 4:19 "But I will come to you soon, **if the Lord wills,** and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power."

1 Cor. 16:7 "For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, **if the Lord permits.**"

Heb. 6:3 "And **this** we will do **if God permits.**"

1 Pet. 3:17 "For it is better to suffer for doing good, **if that should be God's will,** than for doing evil."

B. When things don't go according to Christians' carefully, prayerfully prepared plans, we can rest in knowing **God's plans have never changed and will never be thwarted.**

Rom. 1:10, 13 "always in my prayers, **asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you...** I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles."

Rom. 15:32 "so that **by God's will** I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company."

Job 42:2 "I know that you can do all things, and that **no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**"



Questions for Personal Reflection and/or Community Group discussion:

- (1) Do you consider yourself a planner? Do you ever wish you were or weren't? Why or why not?
- (2) Recall a time when circumstances showed God's will to be very different than what you planned or hoped for. How did you feel then? How do you feel about it now?
- (3) Before hearing the sermon, did you consider planning without God's will in mind to be "evil" as James 4:16 says it is? Why or why not?
- (4) How might planning with an "If the Lord wills" attitude change our perspective when our plans come together? How might it change our perspective when our plans fall apart?
- (5) Pastor Peter asked "Does God have 'editing rights' to your life?" Which areas of your life came to mind when that question was asked? Which areas of your life might God be requesting "editing rights" from you?