

## Factoring God Into My Life

(James 4:13-5:11)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week I talked about some challenges that we at Colonial Heights can expect to face in 2024 and some things we need to do to turn them into opportunities to grow in the Lord.
2. Today I want to continue in that same direction of considering the year ahead and how we can make it the best we possibly can as servants of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ.
3. To do that I want to talk about the importance of factoring God into my life.
  - A. I want to do this because gaining the most from life requires living as we were created to live.
  - B. It is like saying that the best way to use a screwdriver is to drive screws!
  - C. Most, however, fail to live life to its fullest because they fail to factor the supreme position of God and His will into their life.
4. In James 4:13-5:11 the Holy Spirit addresses this issue and why it is so important.
  - A. This is done in the form of two rebukes followed by exhortation to better living.
  - B. I realize that we just ended a study of James taught by Danny Cook.
  - C. So, I want to present this lesson as an exclamation point at the end of what he had to say with the purpose, again, of helping us start and live out 2024 in a proper fashion.
5. For, as James' words will point out, any year, or time, that God graciously gives us to live on this earth must be spent with God and His will at the forefront of our plans and actions.

### BODY:

#### **I. God must be factored into our plans (James 4:13-17):**

- A. The rebuke (Jas. 4:13-14 – “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow **we will go** to such and such a city, and **spend a year** there and **engage in business** and **make a profit**.”<sup>14</sup> Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”).
  1. “Come now,” though only used here and in Jas. 5:1 in the Bible, was common in Greek and indicated the importance of giving immediate attention to what was about to be said (4:13).
    - a. The writer seeks the attention of those who in this case **plan** their year of business with **complete confidence** in **their** decisions and actions to produce the **profit** they desire.
    - b. Of course, *planning* is a necessary part of life as is *gain*. It is rightly said that “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” So, planning and profiting are not the problem.
  2. God, however, condemns self-confident planning, or planning that fails to reckon with not only the uncertain and transitory nature of life in this world, but with God (4:14)
    - a. The certainty of the *when*, *where*, *what*, the *duration*, and the *results* of their planning expose the extent of their foolish **self-confidence**.
    - b. Why? Because “...**you do not know** what your life will be like **tomorrow**. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”
      - i. History and experience tell us that as humans we cannot anticipate what will happen tomorrow, much less next week or throughout the year.
      - ii. The wise man said, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).
      - iii. What foolishness it is, therefore, to put my trust in my own stability and that of my surroundings! Both will let me down!
- B. The Lord's will must be considered first (Jas. 4:15 – “Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”).
  1. God's control of earthly affairs **and** His will for my life are to be the foundation upon which I build my future (e.g., Paul in Acts 18:21 – “but taking leave of them and saying, “I will return to you again **if God wills**,” he set sail from Ephesus”).
  2. It is God's will that determines whether **I live** and **do this or that**.

- a. Remember the rich man in **Lk. 12:19** who plans involved him storing up much and saying to himself, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry”?
- b. Well, do not forget that in **Lk. 12:20** God said to him, “You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”
- C. To plan without God is to boast in one’s sinful arrogance and pride (Ja. 4:16-17 – “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”).
  - 1. To act this way, James says, is to “boast” in matters of arrogance, or to take pride in their self-confident planning that is devoid of God and the realities of life.
    - a. This is the “boastful pride of life” condemned as being **of this world** in 1 Jn. 2:16.
    - b. This is to proudly take center stage instead of God, which He will oppose (Jas. 4:6 – “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”).
  - 2. So, since we should know that our life and all things **depend on God**, if we fail **to do good** by **acknowledging** God’s dominant role in our plans, then it is sin (4:17)!

## II. God must be factored into our view and use of wealth (James 5:1-6):

- A. God warns the unrighteous rich (5:1-3 – “Come now, you rich, weep and howl **for your miseries which are coming upon you**. <sup>2</sup> Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be **a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire**. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”).
  - 1. James is now targeting the ungodly rich who trust in their wealth and use it in evil ways.
  - 2. Trust in riches brings misery, which now calls for weeping and wailing (ie., to shriek) now *in hopes of repentance* (5:1).
    - a. That is not what people think about riches, is it—that riches will bring them misery?
    - b. God, however, is telling us that if riches/stuff is what you seek, you seek misery!
  - 3. This is because these same riches will witness against them (5:2-3a)!
    - a. For, their nice possessions and abundance of food have **rotted**, their clothes are **moth-eaten**, and their gold and silver have **rusted**!
      - i. Each of these are past tense indicating that they have already failed them.
      - ii. So, they have put their trust in what is already worthless, even as Jesus warned! (Matt. 6:19-21 – “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”).
    - b. The degradation of their riches will **witness against them** in the Day of Judgment (5:3b)!
      - i. It will witness of the foolish foundation of their life and maybe even of their sinful choice to hoard their goods rather than to use them for good (4:17).
      - ii. So, although these riches have been stored as their assurance for a good life, their witness in Judgment will bring the fire of God’s wrath upon them!
- B. God warns against defrauding others (Jas. 5:4-6 – “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, **cries out against you**; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup> You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.”).
  - 1. Just as the degradation of their wealth would witness against them, so the **cries** of the **wages defrauded the poor** will **witness against them** before the Lord of Sabaoth/Hosts (5:4).
    - a. The O.T. Law demanded that workers be paid daily “lest he cry against you to the LORD, and it be sin in you” (Deut. 24:14-15).
    - b. This was because common laborers, which would include a great number of Christians, needed a steady income to provide “daily bread,” or bread **bought daily** for himself and his family by the wages he earned.

- c. So, James reminds the unrighteous rich that the things they thought they were “getting away with” were **crying out** and that God hears!
  - i. This is reminiscent of Abel’s blood crying out from the dust (Gen. 4:10).
  - ii. This cry for vindication comes before the very **Lord of Hosts, the almighty God**, who is holy, powerful, and will judge those who deal wickedly with others!
- 2. Though the ungodly rich live in luxury seemingly with impunity, they will not escape God’s judgment (Jas. 5:5-6)!
  - a. For, things are not always as our human perspective believes (5:5)!
    - i. Those who have lived for luxuries and meaningless pleasure are only fattening their hearts for the day of slaughter (Ja. 5:5).
    - ii. Their lives are like the calf that joyfully fills its belly with the *abundant grain in the stall* while the other cows scrounge around for *grass in the field*.
      - 1) Though he may seemingly have it better than the other right now, he is being fattened up for the slaughter!
      - 2) For, God knows their wickedness, how they condemn the righteous to death who has no power to resist them, and he will not let it pass (Ja. 5:6).
  - b. What can we gain from this warning?
    - i. First, though it might be tempting for Christians to envy the unrighteous rich and their power, they should rather pity them for the end that it will bring.
    - ii. Second, we as Christians must take it to heart that God demands **honesty** in our dealings with one another, even if it is to our loss or hurt! For, we must trust that God will reward this good behavior in the end!
    - iii. Third, although we may question the value of our cry for justice in this wicked world, the Almighty God hears and will respond in the Judgment!
  - c. So, as you examine your goals and aspirations for 2024 be sure that you understand that it is not those to **gain this world’s wealth**, but those **who gain God’s favor in properly using their wealth** that will ultimately and eternally be blessed!

### III. Factoring God into our approach to trials and suffering (James 5:7-11).

- A. Based on God’s justice coming on the wicked, James now **exhorts** his brethren in Christ (5:7-9 – “Therefore be patient, **brethren**, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup> You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.”).
- 1. We must be expectantly patient in our faith like the farmer (5:7-8).
  - a. Just as the farmer plants and waits for the early and later rain to produce its reward, so Christians are to wait patiently, strengthening their heart in the knowledge their coming deliverance and the judgement against the wicked **at Christ’s return** (5:8).
    - i. For, we must trust God to take vengeance on those who harm and deal wickedly (Rom. 12:19 – “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”).
    - ii. James reminds us that **we can do this** because **His coming is near**, ever at hand, though we know not when, and justice will be done and Christ glorified in His saints (2 Thess. 1:6-8).
- 2. We must not complain against our brethren (5:9).
  - a. We do this because **Christ the judge is at the door** (5:9).
  - b. This may seem out of place in the context, but experience shows that when under duress we tend to take out our frustration and pain on those closest to us!
  - c. So, the Spirit warns us that we must constantly be monitoring our attitude and the words it produces in relationship to our brethren.
  - d. For, only in doing this will we be ready to “open the door” when Christ returns!

- B. We must remember the blessings that come to those who endure (Ja. 5:10-11 – “As an **example**, brethren, of **suffering** and **patience**, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> We **count those blessed who endured**. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the **Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**”).
1. God wants his people to follow the example of the prophets and approach life with **uncompromising patience** in the face of **sufferings** (5:10).
    - a. Doing what is right does not ensure proper treatment in this world.
    - b. For, it was the prophets’ faithfulness to God’s will that brought persecution upon them!
    - c. Though we have had unprecedented freedom to worship and serve God in this country, that reality is fading with the rise of immorality and ungodliness in this country!
  2. What we must see by faith is that their **endurance** through suffering, like that of Job, means that they were **blessed** (5:11).
    - a. Blessed does not mean they were “happy” in experiencing pain and suffering, but that they **found approval and reward from God!**
    - b. For, the prophets and Job saw in their endurance of faith that “the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”
    - c. The same is true for God’s people today (Rom. 8:16-18 – “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him** so that **we may also be glorified with Him.** <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”).
  3. So, as you begin 2024, prepare yourself for the **good and the bad**, knowing that as God’s people we will be hated by the world but loved by Him who rewards the faithful!

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Everyone everywhere starts the new year the same (i.e., the clock strikes 12 on New Year’s Eve and we have a new day and a new year).
  - A. This is true of those outside of Christ and those inside Christ’s body and salvation.
  - B. This is true of those who will remain faithful to the Lord and those who will not.
2. So, what is going to make the difference for you in 2024? The answer is whether you choose to factor God and His will into your life! In other words, are you determined to put **God’s will first**...
  - A. In the **plans** you make, including those to support you and your family?
  - B. In your **view** and **use** of the **wealth** God has blessed you with?
  - C. In your **approach** to **trials and suffering** you must endure for Christ’s sake?
3. Yes, everyone begins the year the same way. How it ends, however, is up to you!
4. Will you come to Christ today in F-R-C-Bp? If you have strayed, will you return now in R-C-Pr?