

## **The Life of Faith, Part 10, A Study in James: Trust God With the Future**

James 4:13 through James 5:12 encourages believers to put their trust in God. After telling us to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, James instructs believers to trust God and not our own wisdom. The focus of this section is preparing believers for the future.

**There are three sections in this text.**

- Two of these start with the phrase, “Come now,” (James 4:13, and James 5:1).
- The third section encourages us to be patient until the coming of the Lord, (James 5:7).

**The first section instructs us to have humble trust and reliance on God, (James 4:13-17).**

**James 4:13 NKJV** Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”;

James is not telling us to make no plans for the future. He is rebuking presumptuous pride that makes plans without awareness or consideration of God’s control and our own limitations. He says a merchant planned a year of business dealings without consideration of God’s will.

**Proverbs 27:1 NKJV** Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

**James 4:14 NKJV** Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

Two things are certain. God knows everything and we do not know everything.

Look at those words: “You do not know what will happen tomorrow.” Even the best made plans can be changed by one unforeseen event. It is presumptuous pride that says with absolute certainty “we will go and do!”

“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” Have you noticed how quickly time passes? In Luke 12:16–21, Jesus told about a rich man who made great plans for the future, but lost it all when his soul was required of him. All of his planning came to nothing when he faced death. We should make our plans with the understanding that only God knows what the future holds.

**James 4:15-16 NKJV** Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

**The life of faith trusts God’s will in everything that we do.**

A major part of our faith is expressed in the life that we now live and the things that we do. True faith constantly looks toward God for guidance and help.

These verses take into account God’s will in all of our actions. God has placed many blessings at our disposal, but we live with God’s will in mind and this impacts all that we do.

What am I saying? Although we have all of these blessings, we depend on God’s will and guidance to properly dispense our duties. Faith acknowledges God’s will in all of our planning, expectations and work of our hands. Our strength and power to do God’s will comes from God Himself. Our life and future are in God’s hands. This does away with all boasting and pride.

**Verse 17 balances this life of faith and God’s will.**

**James 4:17 NKJV** Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

James is calling us to a life that is directed by God’s will. This pursuit of God’s will requires diligent purposeful action and doing. Each of us should pursue God’s will and then

do the good that God has laid before us. Our planning is based on the persuasion that our lives and future are in God's hands. We should live with total dependence on God and His will. To assist us with this, God has given us the aid of the Holy Spirit to direct and guide us in what we do and say.

**The second section instructs us to depend on God and not on the things we have acquired, (James 5:1-6).**

These are some of the strongest words that James gives. It is easy to say this section does not apply to me. We should listen to this warning and see if it addresses any area of our faith or lifestyle.

**James 5:1 NKJV** Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

James is talking about the dangers of living a blessed and prosperous life. Most of us know God's blessing and favor. This blessing and favor is God's mercy and grace. Every blessing and gift carries with it responsibilities on how we handle what God has given us. James wants believers to be prepared for the Lord's coming and the day of judgment. This is the same kind of warning that is given by other writers in the Bible.

**Romans 14:11-12 NIV84** It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' " So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**1 Peter 4:5 NIV84** But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

**Jesus taught about these same things in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.** You should read this section of Christ's teaching. He continued these warnings in Luke 12. Jesus spoke about servants who were to be ready for their master's coming. He told them to be dressed and ready for service and keep their lamps burning like men waiting for their master.

**Luke 12:38 NIV84** It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

**Luke 12:47-48 NLT** "And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

**Listen to James' warnings.**

**James 5:2-6 NLT** Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.

James is warning us that the wealth and treasures of this life are deceptive. These things rust and rot away. They are not reliable or lasting.

Have you noticed how quickly the things of this life slip through your fingers? Jesus said,

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth or rust destroy,” (Matthew 6:19-20). The Biblical warning is to use the things that God has given wisely knowing that we will all give account to God.

**This gets back to the theme of this section.**

We must live with Godly fear knowing that the Lord is coming and we will give account to Him. Take account of every good and perfect gift you have received from the Father above and maximize your opportunities by doing God’s will.

Jesus referenced this same message with the parable of talents. Jesus said, three men were given various talents. One received five, another received two, and the third received one. The master expected each of them to use what they were given and maximize their opportunity. Each of them knew their master’s will in the matter and knew that he expected them to use what was given. When the lord returned, he was expecting a good return on what they had been given. Two of the men doubled what they had received, but the third man hid his talent and did not use it. The master rewarded them according to their faithfulness and obedience to what they knew was his will.

**The ultimate reward is hearing this message of praise.**

**Matthew 25:21 NKJV** His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

**The final part of this section tells us to be patient until the coming of the Lord.**

**James 5:7-8 NKJV** Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

This lesson should help each of us. If you have been blessed by God’s mercy and grace, you should faithfully use the things that God has given you. If you are going through times of suffering and difficulty, be patient until the coming of the Lord.

**Our only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Whether we are blessed or going through times of suffering, we must keep our focus on the Lord. James refers to the farmer who labors without knowing what the weather will be or if he will reap a bountiful or scarce harvest. He labors with expectation for the day of harvest.

James tells us to be patient until the coming of the Lord. Be patient for your labor for the Lord will reap a harvest. Establish your hearts, for God is faithful and the coming of the Lord is at hand. That word establish means to stand strong and not waver. Your hope in the Lord is not in vain.