

# Making Life Count (Part II)

## James 4:13-17

**Purpose of series:** The purpose of this series is to assist you in taking off the limits of God's expression through you and in your life and His blessing on your life. The book of James reveals many practical duties and activities of Christian, that if not heeded will hinder God's expression through them and blessings on them, especially during difficult seasons of our life. This series will provide us with a practical view of how to live a life of spiritual impact and personal fullness in a difficult world under pressure.

**Purpose of this message:** We have been taught that if you don't learn from history, you are bound to repeat it. James is keeping us from repeating history while at the same time he is attempting to help us make history. Now is not the time to bury your head in the sand. We will have to soberly absorb the reality of the world surrounding us and force the question, "It this the time that the prophets have talked about?" The Big mistakes that we can make at this moment are addressed by James in his letter to a struggling people caught up in an economic and governmental, world changing environment. Their world had turned upside down and the natural, inward fleshed screamed to be appeased. That's what we do when we are overwhelmed, stressed and out of control without the help of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of God's Word. We are bound to make mistakes, and foul up eternal opportunities without the help of God's Word rooted deep in our heart. But, we can also be the overcomer's described throughout the New Testament in times of overwhelming odds. We are living in one of the most challenging times that anyone could live on this earth, but it is also one of the most exciting times in history. The key, don't make the big mistakes that James teaches us about and look with anticipation what God is about to do.

### Last Week

*"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."*

**James 4:13-17**

Last week I had mentioned two ways that this scripture is often misinterpreted,

#### 1. God Doesn't Approve of You Making Plans.

Now let me reinterpret this scripture in the way many people of God hear and read it.

***"You who attempt to make plans of many kinds for today or tomorrow, to go somewhere, to attempt to do something over any extended period of time, to make money, you can never count on tomorrow or your plans. Who do you think you are? You're nothing, just a mist, here and then gone."***

But we found out that it is not wrong to have plans as long as they are dedicated and placed before God's approval. There are many scriptures that tell us to plan, planning is not the issues, God in the plans are.

## 2. Whatever, The Lord's Will Be.

***“Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'”***

**James 4:15**

Too many people have everything lined up in their life, everything is accounted for, there is a plan for this and a plan for that, but when it comes to God they just throw up their hands and say, “Whatever the Lord's will is.” But there is something residing in you and me if you are a believer today that is capable of wreaking havoc on Satan's plan.

***“...greater is he who is in you than he that is in the world.”***

**I John 4:4b (KJV)**

Today, the best thing you can do for yourself is to say, “God, I'm yours. Everything I've got is yours and all I want is you. I want your guidance, I want your blessing, I want your wisdom, I want your hand in my life. I will stand on your Word.

***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”***

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

And this ultimately leads us us to the first Big Mistake described by James found in these verses, James 4:13-17

### 1. **First Big Mistake, Planning Your Life Without God**

As James describes this individual, you do not find anywhere of him mentioning God in his business plan. This guy never considers, “What does God think of my plan?”

**We need to stop excusing our lack of participation in serving God with, “the Lord's will be...” and start exerting our activity with “the Lord's will is...”**

**There are three basic responses that we can respond to God's will:**

1. **I acknowledge it.** I need to admit that God has a will and it is available to me.
2. **I accept it.** I really want God's will and I accept it into my life.
3. **I anticipate it.** I now look for it. I anticipate it and not dread it but deeply desire it.

**Planning our life without God is the first BIG mistake we can make.**

### 2. **The Second Big Mistake, Assuming Life Will Never Change**

Many people do not understand that the decisions they make today make them tomorrow. It is easy to take for granted that we will live forever and I've got the rest of my life to straighten up, to live for God or make right choices.

***“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”***

**James 4:14**

***“As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”***

**James 4:16**

Here are three facts to consider when making our life count:

1. **Life Is Unpredictable-** Look what James says, "...you don't even know..." In all reality, we really don't know what's going to happen. We can make all kinds of guesses, but there are so many unpredictable things that can change. Who knows how long we will be fighting this war. Who will be our president? What is going to happen with our nations economy? Talk about unpredictable, this is one of the most unpredictable times I have ever lived in, and one of the most unpredictable times in America.

Many of our church members who are farmers have learned that you cannot depend on this undependable Kansas weather, but they have learned to put their hope is in the Lord. There are no guarantees, there are no absolutes to what is going to happen around us, now or probably for the next few years. It really is a toss up.

It's very important that we do not get frightened or discouraged, we just have to remember where our trust is and trust God more. If you should be concerned for your life, now is the time. But in concern for your life, now is the time to put your trust in God. You don't know what's going to happen, life is unpredictable and God is always there!

2. **Life Is Brief-** Look again what James is saying, "You are a mist..." "Mist" in Greek is "atmos" where we get the word "atmosphere". Your life is like the breath that come out of your mouth on a cold, chilling morning. It comes out and within seconds it doesn't exist again. Not one of us have the absolute that we are going to live for three more days.

The Bible uses many ways to describe our life, like a leaf, grass, shadow, cloud, puff of smoke, vapor. We can't number our own days and we can't take tomorrow for granted.

*""Come," each one cries, "let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer!  
And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better.""*

Isaiah 56:12

Isaiah is defining the attitude that was ruining Israel. Do you know guys like this? Let's party, let's get wasted, life is great and it's going to stay that way. James tells us that this is a dangerous attitude. You can't tell what tomorrow holds and you can't assume it will stay the same as it is right now. We love to attempt to predict our future, make plans and establish goals. We are challenged to set our goals high and attempt to beat last years accomplishments.

**Here is a thought that we should entertain, "What's the difference in making a statement of faith and an arrogant statement? You have to base your future on WHO you know, not WHAT you know!**

Listen, there were some other guys who lived like those described in Isaiah. Gen. 6,

*"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."*

Genesis 6:5

*"The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain."*

Genesis 6:6

*<sup>37</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*

**Matthew 24:37-39**

### **Life Is Brief: Two Who Proclaimed The Truth**

Two pastors you probably have never heard, their names are **John Owen** and **Richard Baxter**. They both pastored in London in the 1660's and were very well respected and considered very sound scholars and stable in their life and preaching, never given to extreme sensationalism. But something happened to both of them that was out of character for both of them, as they looked on their own society they could not ignore the parallels of the sin, immorality and Godlessness of Israel in the Old Testament that brought the judgement of God and their own city of London, surly London would not escape God's judgement. So both men, Owen and Baxter began to proclaim this in their pulpits.

Their congregations first listened in disbelief. London was the financial capital of the world. The whole world at that time was influenced by the actions of London. It was the center of global finance and strategy. In the midst of this extreme growth and power, these two Godly men preached that judgement was coming. They were ridiculed and laughed at. On one particular Sunday, Owens declared to his congregation:

“You know that for many years, without failing, I have been warning you continually of an approaching calamitous time, and considering the sins that have been the causes of it...I have told you that judgment will begin with the household of God; that God seems to have hardened your heart from His fear...and that none knows what the power of His wrath will be. In all these things I have foretold you of perilous, distressing, calamitous times...These now lie at the door, and are entering upon us.”

No one took these two men serious. They were continually mocked and laughed at until all they had said came true. Owen made strong statements. **He said that disease, economic chaos, and destruction of the city would come about. And it did.**

In **1665**, without warning, a **smallpox epidemic** suddenly swept through London. Within a matter of weeks, thousands were dead. There were so many bodies to bury that the people could not dig graves fast enough. Bodies were piled high on carts throughout the city and London was brought to it's knees, but their hearts were not broken.

In the middle of the night on September 2, 1666, a wild man set a row houses on fire. The fire spread easily and engulfed London which hadn't seen rain for months. It burned the city for four days and by the time it was over most of the city was gone, vanished, ashes, rubble and smoke was the evidence that something had once stood there. Listen to what John Owen wrote:

“Ah, London, London! How long has the Lord been striving with thee by His spirit, by His word, by His messengers, by His mercies, and by lesser judgments, and yet thou has been incorrigible, incurable, and irrevocable under all! God looked at the agues, fevers, smallpox, strange sickness, want of trade, and poverty that was coming on like an armed man upon thee, with all the lesser fires that have been kindled in the midst of thee, should have awakened thee to repentance; and yet under all, how proud, how stout, how hard, how obdurate has thou been!”

Listen to this, **what John Owen saw coming upon London did not come in a dream or vision, he saw it in the Word of God. By looking into the Word of God he saw what the future was by reading the past.** I have to say this and I must, we can know America's future by looking into the Bible's past.

Just think about this a moment, “How quick has this world changed around you just since you have been alive?” Just think about America and the changes it has seen.

The Pilgrims were a group of people who were committed to Jesus Christ and were looking for an opportunity to live freely for Him. As a result, heavy persecution fell on them so much that they were exiled to Holland for twelve years and eventually stepped off the Mayflower on the soil of what we now call America. They had very little, the clothes on their back, a few seeds, tools, each other and the Word of God. That's it, but that was enough.

Through the Mayflower Compact they laid an incredible foundation for the new nation. All their laws and governmental strategy was taken directly from the Word of God. **No other nation since Israel has had such a Biblical foundation for their nation and no other nation has been blessed with power and prosperity like this nation.**

Just sixteen years after the Pilgrims landed in America a Christian school was established and named after John Harvard, a highly respected Puritan clergyman in 1636. They taught such things like the flood as an actual historic event and that Jesus' Words were all true and they had no problem believing in God and that one day God would judge this world. They taught about Israel and the reality of falling away from God and falling into deception and the judgement of God. (Steve Farrar, Get In The Ark, Thomas Nelson, Nash., 2000, 8-9)

But today, Harvard no longer believes the biblical account and has an entire different worldview. It is almost unthinkable today to believe if there are any, if many, students or administration, for that matter, on that campus who believe in the existence of a personal God who is involved in the affairs of this world. What would John Harvard think today? I wonder if God looks at us today like he did on the earth during Noah's time,

***“The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”***

**Genesis 6:6**

Life is brief. When you think about time, this change took a few years, but in the expanse of time, it was just a quick event, now here we are.

## The Fall of A Nation

Paul describes and outlines the steps to the demise and fall of a nation in Romans 1,

1. They know God, (Vs. 21)
2. They do not honor God or give thanks for His blessings (Vs. 21)
3. They turn away from His wisdom, wallowed in their own futile thoughts (Vs. 21, 22)
4. They deify man, who is mortal and corruptible (Vs. 23)
5. They deify animals and nature, and serve “the creature, rather than the Creator” (Vs. 23, 25)
6. Lust becomes central to their culture and no limit to sexual impurity (Vs. 24, 26)
7. Homosexuality becomes rampant. Women begin to do what is unnatural and men burn in their desire toward one another- “men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (Vs. 26-27)
8. God gives them over “to a depraved mind” (Vs. 28). At this point God judges them and removes His hand of protection and blessing. He gives them over to a landslide of all the destructive evils their previous acts have invoked.

“<sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Romans 1:29-32

Let me ask you a question. **“Is there anything that Paul mentions here that doesn't look like America?”**

In **David Wilkerson's** book, *America's Last Call*, he tells us that the sin of America has outdone every other generation, including Noah's day, Sodom and Gomorrah, and any other time in history. The combination of what our nation has done outdoes the rest combined.

**“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”**

James 4:14

Why are you establishing goals and making plans? One reason and one reason only, it is because God has invited you to be a part of His great plan. God's people hold the destiny of America. We cannot be frustrated with the world when it acts in its own nature. The real frustration is when the people of God do not act in their God-given nature. We are not of this world...or are we? It is the people of God who hold the keys to our city. God is going to have the final say and will draw the final curtain. But we cannot raise our hands in total abandonment and say, “The Lord's will be...” but we should say, “The Lord's will is...” What is the Lord's will?

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the*

*world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

John 3:16-17

***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."***

John 3:36

*"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

John 5:24

## **Blind To Reality**

You can see the nature of America recently in less than a week after the federal government committed \$85 billion to bail out AIG, the executives of the giant AIG insurance company headed for a week-long retreat at a luxury resort and spa, the St. Regis Resort in Monarch Beach, California. The rooms at the resort can cost over \$1,000 a night. AIG paid more than \$440,000 for the retreat, including nearly \$200,000 for rooms, \$150,000 for meals and \$23,000 in spa charges. They are absolutely desensitized at the reality of our times. They are the ones that Isaiah spoke about, let's party, tomorrow will be better!

**"This unbridled greed,"** said Cong. Mark Souder (R-IN), **"it's an insensitivity to how people are spending our dollars."** (By BRIAN ROSS and TOM SHINE, October 7, 2008, ABC News) Here's how James puts it,

***"As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil."***

**James 4:16**

There is a war that we are faced with. There are many uncertainties, confusion is rampant and we do not know how to respond to the alarm. There is a sense of panic, a desire to actually ignore the reality around us and pretend nothing is happening, just trust the government and believe it will all blow over. But what do we really need to do?

***"So don't be anxious about tomorrow -- God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."***

**Matthew 6:34 (LB)**

God wants us to live one day at a time and ready to live for Him. God looked at Noah and saw a righteous man, and He saved him. Noah lived in a time that the temptation to compromise was just as great as now. It was hard to do the right thing, to remain true to his wife and guard his eyes. It was a challenge to refuse sexual temptation that came at him on a daily basis. It was easy to believe life would never change and there was no real reason to be concerned. It was challenging to keep their finances from going out the window and controlling their spending so they could build the ark. It was hard as a Father to stand his ground and say no to his children when all the other parents were saying yes! It was difficult to have a personal conviction that no one else shared with him and if they did they would still think he was being a bit ridiculous and weird. It took a man of great conviction to believe that God would do what He said He would do, even though the human race had never seen rain before, and neither had

Noah. But Noah believed God! Noah is our Biblical example as to how brief our life really is. Maybe you have heard this statement,

**“Life is what happens to you when your are planning for something else.”**

**Here is another statement:**

**“Real life happens when your plans are made by God!”**

A great Puritan preacher Thomas Watson wrote,

**Obedience makes us precious to God, his favorites.**

*“If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.”*

**Exodus 23:22**

### **God's Judgement, A Choice**

God gave Israel a choice in Deuteronomy 28, obey Him and receive blessing, disobey Him and receive cursing. It was their choice. They could have chosen the blessings, but they chose the curses instead. The sufferings they endured as a result of their sin were totally unnecessary, yet they chose God's judgment, just as we are doing. Even though we suffer at times as a Christian, the judgment of God is not for the believer.

Israel was camped on the plains of Moab. Near them was the Jordan River and just beyond that...the Promised Land. Their mission was to cross the Jordan and go in to take their Promised Land. It was not going to be an easy task, there were still giants in the land and the enemy were more violent and perverse than they had ever seen.

God is making a covenant, or agreement with us similar to that He made with Israel. This agreement involved their inner hearts. God wanted a one-on-one, loving relationship with each person in the nation of Israel.

What God offers us today is a relationship, not to be puppets or unwanted slaves. God wants our obedience to flow out of a deep relationship we have with Him. God wanted Israel to live in happiness, peace, and prosperity. He wanted to give them everything the world attempt to get on it's own...without God.

The sixty-eight verses in Deuteronomy 28 gives us the blessings and curses of God. The first fourteen verses contain the blessings of God, and you should read them,

*“And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the Lord your God.”*

**Deuteronomy 28:2**

**Daniel Webster** made a statement that is worthy of mentioning here,

“If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper, but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury us and all our glory in profound obscurity.”

The curses in Deuteronomy 28 can be broken down into seven areas of judgment.

1. He will send famine (Vs. 17, 48)
2. He will send drought (Vs. 22-24, 48)
3. He will send blight/mildew (agricultural fungus) (Vs. 18,22,39-40)
4. He will send locusts (Vs. 38,42)
5. He will send plagues (Vs. 21-22, 27,35,59-61)
6. He will bring about military defeat (Vs. 25-26,49-52)
7. He will bring about complete devastation (Vs. 23-26)

The curse will be as much a part of God's covenant as were the blessings. So what do we do?

### **Make Plans**

1. Don't spend what you don't have (Proverbs 13:22; 23:4-5)
2. Decrease your debt, rather than increase it (Proverbs 22:7)
3. Invest in eternal things (II Corinthians 8:1-15)
4. Invite the Lord Jesus Christ to be your financial adviser.
5. Lean on the Lord as your primary provider.

*"Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away."  
Psalm 37:1-2*

*"The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty."  
Psalm 37:18-19*