

The Basics of Christianity

Living According to God's Will

James 4:13-17

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with "The Basics of Christianity" series. The purpose for this series is so we can be more effective in our witness to those who have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

When Jesus walked on this earth He was always in harmony with God, His Father. He always and only did the will of His Father. I am sure that each of us at some point in our Christian lives have wished that we could know the will of God in every situation that we face and be able to do His will. This morning we will look at the scriptures in order to learn how we also can **Live According to God's Will**.

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 4:13-17 (NASB95)

¹³ 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." ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

Five decisions are made here.

- You will leave today or tomorrow.
- You will travel to a selected city.
- You will stay there a year.
- You will set up a business.
- You will buy and sell and make a profit.

You might ask, "So, what is wrong with planning?" Nothing, really, as long as we plan considering "what is God's will?" James tells us that our attitude should be **"If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."**

What makes the five decisions good or bad is the attitude by which we made them.

The scriptures tell us that when we accepted Christ in our life, that we are **no longer our own**. We have been **bought with a price** by Christ's death on the cross. We are to **love God** with all of our hearts and serve only Him.

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB95)

12 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove **(Know) what the will of God is**, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

I would like to consider four attitudes, that we might have, that will direct how we live our life.

BODY:

The **first** attitude people can use to determine how to live their life is a complete...

I. Indifference to God's Will.

Many people are living as if the only thing that matters is that they succeed in life. They get up in the morning, plan their day, go to work, eat, pay the bills, run the errands, check their finances, and go to bed. The next day is another day exactly the same, with absolutely no consideration to God.

The goal is just to get through life as comfortably as possible with no thought to God or what happens to them when they die. Many feel that **"if" there is a God**, they will be OK because they **"lived a good life"**.

This may be one of Satan's greatest deceptions.

- Just live a good life,
- Provide for your family,
- Stay out of trouble,
- Obey the laws of the land,
- and everything will turn out OK.

Have you fallen into this trap?

Living your life without God and making these decisions in life, without considering God's will, is **foolish and worthless**. We cannot control the future. We do not have the **wisdom to know or the power to control** future events.

When we live life our way, we are only storing up treasures on earth. We cannot take our possessions with us when we die. Our whole life has been in vain. You need the Lord to guide you in your planning. We **MUST** be storing up treasures in heaven by doing the Lord's will, not treasures on earth that will rust and go away by doing our own thing.

So what is wrong with verses 13-14?

Five decisions are made here.

- You will leave today or tomorrow.
- You will travel to a selected city.
- You will stay there a year.

- You will set up a business.
- You will buy and sell and make a profit.

If these decisions were made for your own self with a total indifference to God, then you will perish.

The **second** attitude people can use to determine how to live their life is an...

II. Arrogance Against God's Will.

This attitude is held by people who acknowledge God, but do not seek His will in their lives. They don't care what God's will is in their life.

James 4:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Parable of the Rich Fool.

Look at all of the "I's" in this scripture.

Luke 12:16-21 (NASB95)

¹⁶ And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" ²⁰ But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

How foolish it is to try to trump God's will. When we compete against God we will always lose. Time and life are not our own. You do not know what tomorrow will bring.

The **third** attitude people can use to determine how to live their life is by...

III. Disobeying God's Will.

This attitude is held by people who acknowledge God, and knows a specific thing or things that God wants him to do, but refuses to do it.

James 4:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

We have a perfect example of someone who was asked to do something for the Lord and he tried to run away from it.

Jonah 1:1-4 (NASB95)

¹ The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai (Ah-Mitt'-Tie) saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

⁴The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

Jonah knew that God wanted him to go to Nineveh and warn them of their wickedness, but Jonah decided to run from God. He chose to go the opposite direction. He got on a ship and God caused a great storm, so that even experienced sailors were scared of their lives.

Running from God is foolish. We cannot hide from God. When we try to avoid God's will, we only make our life and the lives around us miserable. There is a punishment for disobedience. The men on the ship were experiencing the possibility of death.

Jonah 1:12-17 (NASB95)

¹² He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come upon you.*" ¹³ However, the men rowed *desperately* to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming *even* stormier against them. ¹⁴ Then they called on the Lord and said, "We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased."

¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

¹⁷ And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Notice that the sailors did the right thing. They sought the will of the Lord in prayer, offered a sacrifice, and pleaded that He would spare their lives. I am sure that they prayed that God would subdue the storm without them having to throw Jonah overboard as he insisted. When it was apparent that it was not God's will to leave Jonah on board, they also pleaded for forgiveness for having to throw him overboard. But God still had plans for Jonah, so he caused a great fish to swallow him and he had to live in its belly for three days. When God spared Jonah by having the great fish spew him out on dry land, he told Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh, which he did, but his attitude was wrong. He had been told to warn them that they needed to turn from their wicked ways or they would be overthrown. Jonah did not expect them to listen, but they did. Instead of rejoicing, it made him angry. He wanted them to be overthrown to prove that what he was saying was true. In his **mind** I am sure that Jonah felt like God made him look like a fool. How was he ever going to prove that what he was warning them actually would have happened.

Jonah 3:10-4:1 (NASB95)

¹⁰ When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.

⁴ But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.

We must not only do God's will, but we must do it with the right attitude.

Somehow many people believe that the sin of omission (not doing something) is not a sin like the sins of commission (which is doing something that is wrong).

James reminds us that **one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

The **fourth** attitude people can use to determine how to live their life is...

IV. Living by God's Will.

We know we should be seeking God's will in our life.

How can we know what His will is? The **first step** is to **Read God's Word!**

We must read God's word and understand what He expects from us.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB95)

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

You want to do God's will? You **must** be in love with the scriptures. It is the way in which God speaks to us! You can actually hear God speaking to you and teaching you how to live for Him. **Have you ever thought of it that way?** The more we have the scriptures embedded within us, the more the Holy Spirit can direct us in our lives and **Keep Your mind on God!**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NASB95)

¹⁶ Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Did you catch that? **What is God's will for you?**

First, we are to **rejoice** in the Lord always.

Secondly, we are to pray continuously.

And Third, we are to thank God constantly for His blessings in our lives.

REJOICE ALWAYS. So, what is Joy? **Joy is NOT happiness!** We tend to try to spend our lives trying to do things that we think will make us **HAPPY**. We pursue happiness.

The definition of **happiness** is "*A temporary feeling of pleasure based upon positive circumstances*".

We are always seeking for positive events in our life that can make us HAPPY. But, what happens when things don't go your way? What happens when you lose your job and you can no longer pay the house payments on your house? You are no longer happy.

Regardless of the type of happiness we seek the end result is the same. When the **positive results from those endeavors end**, happiness goes away.

Christ offers us something much better than happiness. Christ offers us **JOY!**

The definition of **joy** is "*A persistent confidence in the character of God that transcends circumstances and leads to a sense of well-being*".

Joy is a mindset or an attitude. It gives us a sense of well being because we have surrendered ourselves to God and know that He is faithful to keep His promises and will provide our needs.

Joy is a choice, not a feeling. We choose to have joy in our lives by our attitude and mindset because we have given God control of our lives. With God in control we will **know** that we are doing His will. We can trust that our current circumstances will work out for good because we love the Lord.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. We are to be in constant communion with God. Too many times we have not let God's Word penetrate our heart. We as Christians tend to be one-sided with God. We pray and ask Him for things, but I believe we often fail to let God speak to us through His Word and be quiet and listen to His direction in our lives. What good does it do us if we ask for His help but **refuse to listen to His answer?**

Knowing that we are to take up our cross and do God's will is great, but how are we to know what His will is in our lives if we do not listen. When was the last time you prayed to God **"What would you have me do today?"**

GIVE THANKS FOR EVERYTHING. Thank God for all of His blessings in our lives. Even in our darkest moments, God remains faithful and continues to shower His blessings upon us. The more our minds dwell on God, the more we will recognize His blessings.

- Thank Him for His Son that He spared on the cross for you.
- Thank Him for the Holy Spirit that lives within us and directs our ways.
- Thank Him for His grace and mercy.
- Thank Him for your health, your shelter, your food, and the clothes on your back.
- Thank Him for the air you breathe and the beauty of His creation that you can see and enjoy every day.

There is no end to the things that God blesses us with by which we can be thankful.

CONCLUSION:

How are you living your life?

- Are you living day by day without any consideration of God's will in your life?
- Do you know that God wants you to live by His will, but you are choosing to do it your own way?
- Do you know things that God wants you to do, but you are unwilling to serve Him?
- Or, are you constantly seeking, listening for, and doing God's will in your life?

If we are to live according to God's will, we must "**Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; and in everything give thanks.**"

This will give us the mindset necessary to serve Him according to His will. We are told over and over in the scriptures to dwell or keep our minds on spiritual things.

Philippians 4:8 (NASB95)

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

By reading God's Word and maintaining a spiritual mindset we can know and live according to the will of God.

The Family of God.