

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Your Life according to James

Your Life according to James - posted by savannah, on: 2016/12/16 8:04

James 4 Verse 13-14

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and make ourselves gains’, whereas you do not know what will be on the morrow.”

“Come now.” This is the first of two “come now”s which introduce two scenarios, both of which are intended to make them face up to serious facts. The first of these reveals the frailty of businessmen whose main concern is monetary gain, in view of the fact that how long they go on living is in God’s hands, and the second reveals the frailty of businessmen’s riches, and the fact that God knows how they are behaving. What they should therefore rather be doing is concentrating on doing what they know to be right (James 4:17).

This first case is of those who are so sure of how their lives will turn out that they make plans accordingly. They say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and gain wealth”. James would appear to have a special concern for those who travelled around and had no settled church home. It was easy for such men to lose touch with their faith. But they also provided a lesson for all.

Notice their arrogance as far as God is concerned. They believe that they can regulate their time as they wish (“today or tomorrow”). They believe that they can choose their destination (“into this city”). They believe that they have all the time in the world (“spend a year there”). And they believe that they can do what they want without regard to God’s requirements (“trade and gain wealth”), whereas what they should be doing is recognise the frailty of their lives, and that what they will be able to participate in depends totally on the will of God, thus recognising that the most important thing that they should do is what is good (James 4:17). They should therefore ask themselves, “what is His will?” But they do not do so. They forget that they are mortal, and the result is that they have big ideas about themselves. They forget the words of Proverbs 27:1, “do not boast yourself of tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth”. Compare also the rich fool who forgot that “tomorrow we die” (Luke 12:16-21). That is why they think that they can judge their neighbour (James 4:12 b). It is also why they think that they can run their own lives just as they please (James 4:13-14). But they are wrong on both counts.

Verse 14

“What is your life? For you are a vapour, which appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.”

For what they should remember is what their lives are. They are not substantial. They are rather like a puff of smoke which appears for a short while and then disappears. They are like an early morning mist that soon clears away (Hosea 13:3). For life is brief, and in the midst of life we are in death. So in view of that it is in this light that they should measure how they ought to live, both with regard to judging others (in the face of the fact that we might ourselves face judgment at any time), and with regard to doing good (James 4:17). It is in this light that they should determine what they (or rather God) consider to be important. And if they truly recognise that their lives might disintegrate like a puff of smoke at any moment, they will undoubtedly put more consideration into looking at the things that are unseen, and building up treasure in Heaven (Matthew 6:17-18), for they will recognise that the things that are seen are temporal, and will soon pass away, while the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Verse 15

“Because you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will both live, and do this or that’.”

They should therefore live each day as though it might be their last, and recognise that every day that they have after that, is a gift from God, (for the truth is that every day someone somewhere falls dead, with medical experts not knowing why it happened). They ought then to say, “If the Lord wills, we will both live, and do this or that.” And if they do that they will not consider making gains so important. Note that he does not say, “if the Lord wills we will get gain”. For

if they live in the light of eternity their perspectives will change. They will be more concerned with spiritual gain and with the Lord's will, and with doing good to those in need (James 4:17), because they will recognise that they may shortly have to give account.

(Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills" (1 Corinthians 4:19). "I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits" (1 Corinthians 16:7). On the other hand we must beware of simply saying, if the Lord wills or "DV" in a way that results in it becoming a platitude. There is nothing wrong in it if it is sincere, but we must make sure that we really are taking it into account in what we do, otherwise it will lead to our own condemnation).

Verse 16

"But now you glory in your arrogant words. All such glorying is evil."

But instead of doing that they glory in their arrogant words. They say "we will do this and that" regardless of their mortality, and of God and eternity. But to glory in that way is evil. It is to be casual over what is very important. It is to follow the way of the world, and be a friend of the world. It is to indicate that their minds are not set on things above. It is to live in the light of this world, and not of eternity. It is to be earthly minded and not heavenly minded. It is to overlook the requirements of God, and His concern for their daily lives.

Verse 17

"To him therefore who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

So there is really only one conclusion that they should come to. They should recognise their mortality and put their efforts into what they know that God wants them to do, and that is to "do good". For if they know what He wants of them and do not do it, for them it is sin.

Thus the stress is on the fact that we should be putting our efforts into doing real good in the world, which is, after all, what we know that we ought to be doing. And for us also, knowing that this is what we ought to do means that it is sin if we do not do it. We should note that the emphasis here, as throughout his letter, is on what we should be doing, not on a negative "what we should not do". For when anyone knows what they ought to do, (such as 1. Avoiding the judgment of others; 2. Being aware of frailty, and therefore looking at things that are unseen rather than having gain as their first concern, because they and it will soon pass away and they will leave it all behind, and especially 3. Doing good wherever possible), and yet does not do it, then that is sin. So he is bringing out that we can sin by what we do, by the attitude that we take up towards life, and by what we do not do, doing genuine good towards others. And it is that that should be our first consideration.

This was one of the stresses of Jesus. The good Samaritan did what was required for a person in need, while the Priest and Levite passed by on the other side (Luke 10:30-37). The rich man saw Lazarus at his gate and did nothing for him (Luke 16:19-31). The people brought before Jesus for judgment had failed in their responsibility to do good to His "brothers", while those who were accepted had done so (Matthew 25:31-46). Thus He laid a similar stress on the need for positive goodness, and in the Last Day He will say, "inasmuch as you did not do if for the least of these My brothers, you did not do it for Me."

Comments by Peter P.

Re: Your Life according to James - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/12/16 11:51

Friendship with God- Oswald Chambers

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? " Genesis 18:17

Its Delights. This chapter brings out the delight of real friendship with God as compared with occasional feelings of His presence in prayer. To be so much in contact with God that you never need to ask Him to show you His will, is to be nearing the final stage of your discipline in the life of faith. When you are rightly related to God, it is a life of freedom and liberty and delight, you ARE God's will, and all your commonsense decisions are His will for you unless He checks. You decide things in perfect delightful friendship with God, knowing that if your decisions are wrong He will always check; when He checks, stop at once.

Its Difficulties. Why did Abraham stop praying when he did? He was not intimate enough yet to go boldly on until God

anted his desire, there was something yet to be desired in his relationship to God. Whenever we stop short in prayer and say "Well, I don't know; perhaps it is not God's will" there is still another stage to go. We are not so intimately acquainted with God as Jesus was, and as He wants us to be "one" with Him that they may be one even as we are one. Think of the last thing you prayed about were you devoted to your desire or to God? Determined to get some gift of the Spirit or to get at God? Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. The point of asking is that you may get to know God better. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Keep praying in order to get a perfect understanding of God Himself.

Re: Your Life according to James - posted by savannah, on: 2016/12/20 4:32

What is your life?

It is like a vapor, here today and vanishes tomorrow!

For most, that reality is hardly ever thought about.

I pondered James words as I heard the news. Particularly the news of this woman's passing.

"Zsa Zsa Gabor dead at 99 years old."

She was rich. She was famous. She was married 9 times.

But then I read this about her;

"For the past five years, Zsa Zsa has suffered chronic dementia, locked away in her mansion laying in a hospital bed being fed through tubes in her nasal, not able to speak, see, write or hear. Nor knowing who she was or how famous she was."

Sad indeed! Solomon was so right!

ALL IS VANITY!!!