

“The Letter of James: Presumption”

James 4:13-17

A Sin of Presumption, not Planning (vv. 13, 16)

- Planning for tomorrow is wisdom, not sin.

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)

When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. (Romans 15:28)

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty. (Proverbs 21:5)

- James is condemning as evil the arrogance of planning for the future and seeking to secure the future without reference to God.

And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: 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 ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” ’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:16-20)

- So, ask yourself...
 - Am I telling a God-centered version of the past?
 - Am I asking for a God-centered vision for the future?

The Folly of Presumption (v. 14)

- You can’t possibly know the future.

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

- You don’t necessarily have the future.

For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. ¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength

eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:9-10)

Perhaps, when you read the history of Job, you read it as a strange thing that happened but once in the world, but for the time to come, read it as a thing that happens daily, and frequently, for every man at death is as much deprived of all his earthly goods as Job was... The history of Job is only a shadow of death; it is no more than happens to every man in the world. We cannot think too often of our latter end. Death serves all alike; as he deals with the poor, so he deals with the rich: is not awed at the appearance of a proud palace, a numerous attendance, or a majestic countenance; pulls a king out of his throne, and summons him before the judgment seat of God, with as few compliments and as little ceremony as he takes the poor man out of his cottage. Death is as rude with emperors as with beggars, and handles one with as much gentleness as the other. (Jonathan Edwards)

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Ps. 90:12)

The Way of Humility (vv. 15, 17)

- Remind yourself often of God's sovereignty.

But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus. (Acts 18:21) (see also Rom. 1:10; 1 Cor. 4:19, 16:7; Php. 2:19; Heb. 6:3)

- Reorient your thinking and your planning.

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

- Repent of godly things undone.

Almighty and most merciful Father: we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. (Thomas Cramner)

- Rest in Christ for ultimate security.

The world says, "Perform." Jesus says, "Rest." (Tim Keller)